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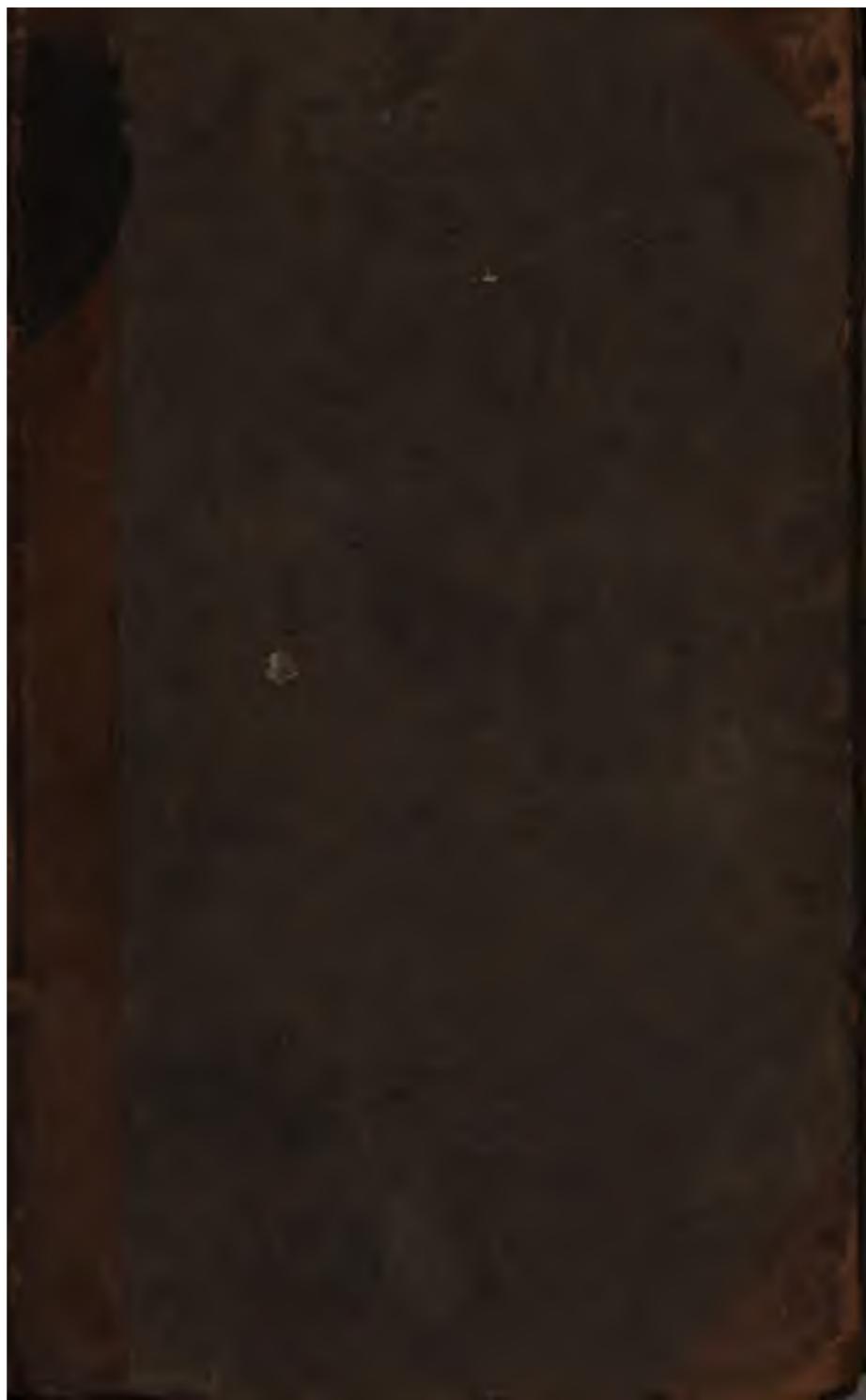
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THE

ITALIAN MARAUDERS.

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CHAPTER XVII.

AT the appointed hour Valerio was again in the chamber of his new friend. " You are faithful to your promise," said he, smiling—" I hope the sympathy which my misfortunes excite in a bosom not entirely destitute of sensibility, repays the interest which you seem to take in listening to them." " Proceed," replied Valerio. " I passed," said the stranger, " the succeeding day wishing

for the conclusion of it. The hours appeared to me doubly tedious, as they slowly passed. At length, however, evening closed in, and I took my station on my chair, as near to the mysterious pannel as I could conveniently place it, so anxious was I to catch a glimpse of the being, the thoughts of whose fate engrossed my whole idea. At length, the moment arrived; with what transport did I behold the pannel unclose its envious barrier, and the voice of my Victoria gently breathing on my ear. I clasped her to my bosom.—“Tell me,” cried I, “can your father have been so relentless as to confine you here, as well as myself? but how much am I indebted to his inclemency if such was the case?” “We

are not," she replied, " indebted to my father for this meeting; we are indebted to his bitterest enemy for it, the Marquis d'Antaces. You have heard of my being forced from the Convent?" I replied in the affirmative. " You have likewise heard of the enmity which subsisted between the Marquis and my father; it is to him we are indebted: but for his interference, I had, perhaps, been immured for life, a sister of St. Rusula. But," she continued, looking round the apartment as she spoke, " are we not liable to interruption here?" " No," replied I—" the time precludes that; explain, I pray you, how you came here." " I cannot, even now, fully explain that," she replied; " but, prepare for our flight.

To-morrow evening we leave this together. At this hour I shall again see you. Do not require an explanation; suffice it, that my plan is almost infallible. I have no doubt of success."

I was silent perforce, and permitted her again to leave me without interruption; she closed the pannel as before. How anxiously did I await the succeeding night, I could scarcely prevail upon myself to eat or sleep. My whole thoughts were engrossed by one object, and I considered every moment stolen from reflection as so many lost minutes of my existence. I occupied the major part of the day in taking surveys of the surrounding country. It was only, however, from one window I could discover any object, as the over-

hanging trees which had concealed the building in which I was confined from the prying eye of justice and curiosity. From this too, the prospect beyond was circumscribed ; I could, indeed, discern the summits of the lofty hills which every where bounded the view. The country between, too, was only by wood and water contrasted here and there by brown spots of barren heath. “ Oh, ye woods ! ” I exclaimed, as I gazed in silent extacy at the idea, “ soon shall I wander through your shadowy intricacies—soon will your impervious gloom afford me shelter from my persecutors ;—be friendly, oh ! ye shades ! shield me from my enemies. In thy bosom the traveller may find rest ; under thy lofty canopies, repose.

“ Night, at length, restored the drooping plants to their pristine vigour, shedding its tears alike on the blooming and decayed, to cheer the one, and, though vain the effort, to restore the other. I saw it set in as I sat reclining on the chair which I had brought to the window, in order to observe the prospect of the setting sun, and, if possible, hasten by my prayers for its speedy retreat.

“ The moment at length arrived, and the panel slowly opened. The appointed signal was given, and I stooped to proceed through the aperture. A moment sufficed for the accomplishment of this part of the business, and I soon found myself in a room larger and more gloomy by far, than the one

I had quitted. Through this we proceeded in silence, till we reached the farther extremity of it, where she selected a key from the many she had concealed under her mantle, and opened a small door, which was so artfully concealed, as almost to appear as pannels of the wainscot. This opened on a flight of narrow stone steps, leading apparently into subterranean passages.

“ We are safe,” said she, breaking the silence which had hitherto prevailed, “ we are now for a moment safe, at least from surprise. When we are completely so, we have each a deal to explain.”

“ Seizing my arm as she spoke, she hurried me through a variety of pas-

sages, apparently, by the damp which assailed us, under ground, a conjecture, which the number of stairs which we had descended, tended to confirm. At length we reached an iron grating which prevented our further progress; it was on the plan of a portcullis, and descended in a grove from the top of the passage. She seized a small wire, (which being suspended from the side of the door,) having there pulled, it drew up sufficient for us both to pass beneath it; we did so. "We are now near the end of our journey, I believe;" cried she, as we began to ascend a flight of stone steps, resembling those we had descended—"I will soon explain to you the mystery of my confinement, and the cause which led to

your own." I remained silent, till, at length, I saw her open a door which led out into the forest, but which was completely concealed from those without by underwood. Perceiving we were at liberty—I drew her along with me, separating our leafy impediments with my arm, as we proceeded. At length we reached a spot less obstructed, and we continued our route with less exertion, but with re-doubled swiftness. The plain appeared to be of amazing extent, as we could perceive by the light which now began to beam in the eastern sky. We, however, declined directly crossing it, as the whole space was exposed to observation ; we turned, therefore, into the

wood which bordered it, always keeping the plain in sight. The road which would lead us to the nearest inhabited town, lay directly across it, and we were obliged to rest ourselves under the shelter of a friendly shade. At length we reached the farthest extremes of the plain from the spot from which we had first began our journey. Here, however, the fatigue of our exertions overcame the feeble strength of Victoria, and I had scarcely announced ourselves at the desired spot, than she sunk into my arms motionless and senseless. I gently laid her on the earth, and hastened to a small rivulet which I saw at some distance. Untying my sash, I drenched it in the stream, and quickly returned upon

the wings of love and apprehension, to the spot. The dampness of the ground contributed considerably towards her revival, and on my return to the place, I had the satisfaction to find her restored to life, and by the help of a bough which hung over her, attempting to rise. This, my assistance enabled her to do, and by slow movements, we once more proceeded. I, however, began to lose all hope of escape from this wood; we had been nearly two days without any sustenance, but such as the wild woods afforded, scarcely sufficient to preserve the existence of the most hardy, beyond the period which we were apparently doomed to pass in this trackless desert. Victoria, at the expiration of the second

day after our departure, grew lame. I now began to consider myself as lost. We were separated from every earthly being—desolate—abandoned—and lost almost amid a region, wild and uninhabited. Nearly dead with fatigue and hunger, my bosom grew cold with despair, and I threw myself on the ground in an agony of mind and body scarcely to be surpassed.

“ I had been a considerable time on the earth nearly insensible ; Victoria was quite so on my bosom, when the sound of footsteps near me, roused me to recollection, and I cast my languid eyes towards the spot from whence it proceeded, when to my inexpressible joy, I discovered a man, dressed as a peasant, standing close beside me.

bending over us, with commisseration painted in his ruddy checks. I motioned him to help me from the ground, which he soon accomplished, and drawing a bottle of spirits from the folds of his cloak, he applied a small portion of it to my lips. I seized it with avidity, and, but for his prudent interference, I should have swallowed the whole contents, but he again forced it from my grasp. I then motioned him to apply it to the lips of Victoria. I now began to recover my recollection, but my strength decreased with it, and I again sunk on the ground. I was some time, as I afterwards found, in this relapse, but on my return to animation, I found myself placed on straw in a low vehicle, which my benevolent preserver was

driving, accompanied by another, who appeared to be his servant. Victoria lay beside me. She was, however, nearly recovered; a pretty looking girl was sitting beside her, using every effort to restore her. I soon recollected the scenes which had passed in the forest, and I scarcely imagined myself freed from the desolating influence of famine, but that a succession of concurring circumstances convinced me of the reality. When sufficiently restored to raise myself from my reclining position, I caught the hand of Victoria to my bosom. She smiled,—but it was an effort for her to do so. “We are near the end of our road;” said the driver to us—“you shall then be better accommodated.” Victoria and myself

cast our eyes towards him ; he was looking towards us with pity, blended with contentment beaming in his features. " We shall be there in a moment," cried he, " my wife I can see waiting at the door."

" He flourished his whip as he spoke, over the cheek of the animal he drove, and we soon reached his cottage, for such it was, where, as he said, his wife was at the door to receive us. " We have the wanderers," cried he to her, as he alighted from the vehicle—" I have them safe ; your brandy produced some good effect in them at least. Help the lady out first, will you ; Adela can help you." They now approached the tail of the cart, and having, with the assistance of their daughter, Adela, taken

Victoria from it, they consigned her into the house. The return of the mother was immediate, and I was conveyed, with the assistance of the benevolent peasant and his servant, together with the daughter, into their hospitable mansion. I was laid on a mattrass in the first room which we entered. Victoria, they told me, in reply to my eager inquiries, was up stairs. Some strengthening nutriment was administered to me in small quantities, and I was then, with the assistance of a draught, left to repose. In the evening when I awoke, the effect of my judicious treatment were so great, that I was enabled to rise without assistance, and I surprised them by walking into the room in which they were sit-

ting. "I will scold you," said the good woman to me, on my entrance, "your exertions will injure you—your efforts to surprise us must have been painful to you." I assured her of the contrary, and that I felt no inconvenience from the effort. A chair was immediately provided for me, with a cushion, in order to render sitting, which they supposed me almost incapable of, supportable to me. The gratitude which I felt to these people at that moment, exceeded, by far, those sensations which I had once felt, and which proceeded from the same source towards the father of Victoria. From him I had received great benefits; but the method he took of bestowing them was so different:—in the one, the man-

ner of it seemed to imply my acceptance of them, as a duty incumbent—in the other, a look of entreaty accompanied the offer, with a benevolence that would have convinced even a misanthrope, that humanity yet dwelt in the world.

“ When shall I be able to return the obligations I owe you, at length burst from my lips. Such a sensation as I then felt, I had never experienced towards my haughty friend the Count. I then only thought when I should cease to be indebted to him. “ You owe us none,” she replied with a smile, “ we have seldom an opportunity of extending relief to those who may stand in need of it—here we are shut out alike from the extases and

miseries of the world ; and, in retirement, enjoy every thing which can render our existence, on this spot at least, supportable : I once lived in the capital—the first part of my life was passed there. I was then surrounded by luxury ? I exchanged it, at twenty, for content, which, since that period, I have never ceased to enjoy. Our only child you saw in the cart ; Adela is the comfort of our lives ; and while we exist, her happiness will be our only care.”

“ Adela entered, as the last words of her mother reached me ? “ how is our invalid,” she continued to her daughter. “ I have left her at last,” she replied, “ but it was not till my further attendance was unnecessary that I did

so ; she is now in a profound slumber, which I hope will restore her." I now desired to see her. "The little rest she has had," replied she, " requires that her repose should remain undisturbed ; and the motion which your appearance would cause, might again throw her into a state worse than any that have preceded it." I was acquiescent perforce. " You must submit," said the elder lady, " to the necessity of suspense ; you have only to pray that that may not be long." With an ill grace I complied. " Are you," at length cried I, after amusing silence of a quarter of an hour—" are you ever under any apprehensions for the banditti, who, I have been told, infest this forest?" " Never ;" she re-

plied—"they are cautious of approaching our habitation, and more so of injuring us in any manner. We have not had above three visits from any of the gang in small parties, and then only through necessity on their part. These visits were for shelter—twice from the elements, and once as a refuge from the officers of justice, who were in close pursuit of them. They concealed themselves in our cellar, taking us into it with them, as hostages for their sincerity. They were safe there; though the officers were very strict in the search, they could not discover the entrance, which is, indeed, very artfully concealed. For this piece of service which we then rendered them, though involuntary on our part,

I believe we are indebted for their forbearance. We have never had a visit from them since, though that is sixteen years ago. Their haunts lie in the middle of the forest, and the scenes of their degradations on the other side ; so we now consider ourselves as safe. But pray, tell me, do we owe your company to their villainy ?" I explained my situation with regard to the robbers, and likewise their persecutions of Victoria and myself. My recital seemed to interest them at least, but the part where I detailed my situation after my escape, excited their commiseration. " How fortunate " said the old lady, " was the circumstance which led my husband to the spot, where he found you ! How many

perhaps, have perished under similar distressing circumstances!" She now begged I would retire to repose, of which I began to be in need, and I accordingly took leave of them for the night. The birds roused me from my slumbers almost ere the sun had touched the neighbouring hills, I arose with it, and met the farmer in the adjoining room, who was preparing for his daily labour, fortifying himself with a breakfast which would have been sufficient, at least, for my principal meal for a week; which having accomplished, he took leave of me, and departed for the field, telling his wife he should return at the usual time. I took a book from a small shelf which decorated the parlour, and had just taken a seat, when

Victoria entered the room.—I seized her hand. “ What do we not owe these good people,” cried she “ for this meeting. Lately, when I cast my eyes on you for the last time, what a pang went to my heart as I took leave of you in that look. Now we meet again, and happy—” She could say no more, but sunk upon the seat to which I led her, lost for a moment in wonder at our deliverance. I was happy in the contemplation of her seeming felicity, but not in my own reflecting. We were about to enter a world, on which we had less to depend, than one of its lowest inhabitants: we were friendless and destitute—likely to be persecuted by *he* *father* on the one hand, and by po-

verty on the other, which his unrelenting fury would contrive to render more irksome. For myself I felt no uneasiness, but to see a being who had left her home, parent, birthright, every thing to share the fortunes of one, whose only estate was untarnished honour, and only dependance labour, was an idea then almost insupportable. The sombre cast of my reflections, had quite absorbed me, and I scarcely recognised surrounding objects. "Melancholy is contagious, I [believe," cried she, to me at length, "for you have infected me; I have just recollected, that when we reach Venice, we have not a home." A tear stood in her eye, I kissed it off, and I could

at that moment have died contented. I was so affected at the few simple words which she had pronounced, that I thought I had lived out all my happiness, and I wished to die. "Alas!" thought I, "how unfortunately congenial are our ideas." Hope, however, succeeding, spied a picture before me if not glittering in brilliance, at least disclosing happiness through a few clouds in the fore ground, which still obscured it. I endeavoured, however, to raise spirits in Victoria which I did not feel myself. "We will leave" said I, "this house as soon as possible, our return to Venice must be as secret as we can make it. I have money sufficient for our sustenance for at least six months." "And I," returned she

with vivacity, " did not leave the castle without securing a sufficiency for every possibility." She now drew a small packet from her pocket, and emptying the contents of it upon the table, shewed me a variety of valuable relicks, which, through all her difficulties, she told me she had preserved. A beautiful portrait, set in diamonds, of her mother, was among the number of her trinkets, and which was by far the most valuable of them I took possession of, with a determination, if possible, of preserving it; but this she declared she would not consent to, as the necessity for appropriating to our own use was now become too urgent to deliberate upon the delicacy, or propriety of disposing of it. And her

mother's charge to her when she delivered it into her keeping, was to preserve it as a dower, which necessity, some time or other, might require her to make use of." We packed up our treasures in the most private and careful manner, and seeing them about us, we determined on leaving our hospitable entertainers the succeeding morning; and accordingly, when our kind hostess again entered the room in which we were sitting, we disclosed our intention; our determined assurances, however, were necessary, to convince her that our resolution was unalterable, and we were persecuted the whole day by the entreaties of every branch of the family to prolong our stay beyond the time we had men-

tioned; but my resolution was taken. I felt an unconquerable aversion to living any longer than was absolutely necessary on the bounty and liberality of people, to whom an offer of remuneration would have been painful and insulting. And, in reply to their solicitations and offers of service, I only begged the loan of a horse to carry Victoria to the next town, which they told me was only three leagues distant. This they willingly agreed to; and we left them the next morning, with every expression of gratitude on my part, which the deep sense of the obligations I owed them, would dictate, and on their's, a warm and affectionate farewell. They had, instead of one, afforded us two horses, together with

a man, who followed us on a third, and who they told us would be a guard and guide, through the intricacies of the wood. We reached our place in safety, and after rewarding our guide for the liberality of his master, and his own civility, we left him to return, and pursued our journey; having determined to exert ourselves in order to reach a small town, a league from where we had arrived. This place we reached in safety, and having provided proper accommodations for our journey the ensuing day, we retired to rest. Early the next morning, we set forward on our journey, and had reliefs of horses, till on the evening of the third day from the time we left the forest we entered Vienna. My first

care, after we had provided ourselves with lodgings, at a good retired house, was to commence a search after an old friend of mine, who had formerly been my tutor, but who had found the church more profitable than the school, and had accordingly turned priest, under the auspices of a nobleman, his friend, and was now become an Abbé. I accordingly waited upon him, having previously gained Victoria's consent to the measure. As it was evening, I found the holy man engaged at vespers, and having waited till he was at liberty, brought him with me to our lodgings. The rights were performed, and he left us to our meditations. Though I was happy at the idea of having for ever secured to myself the fondest hop

of my existence, I was not without my uneasy reflections. I had learnt from my friend, the Abbé, that the noise which our joint disappearance had caused in Venice, was, by no means inconsiderable. Though it was attributed to the true cause by the majority of the people who heard it, yet, so great was the power of the old Count, that no one dared, within his hearing, express their real idea of the circumstance. Among those, however, over whom his influence and power did not extend, the imprisonment of his daughter,—and the seizure, if not murder of myself, appeared to be the prevailing opinion. These conclusions, however, were not drawn from the facts, which had transpired, but from those which

were supposed, but they all fully condemned in proportion to the different degrees of guilt which were ascribed to him.

I treasured these observations up in my memory, and soon discovered that they were founded on reality, and I had every reason to suppose that they had but anticipated the truth, and that my death, or perpetual imprisonment would have been the consequence of my longer delay in leaving the old building in the wood. We had lived a month in our present abode, when, one evening, as we were sitting at the window of our principal apartment, we observed, on the opposite side of the street, two rough-looking men, in

earnest observation, apparently directing their regards towards us. Seizing a favourable opportunity when they were not observing us, we left the window, but I planted myself in such a manner that I was able to keep a scrutinizing glance upon them. They appeared surprised when they again cast their eyes towards the spot where we had set, and discovered that we were gone. They looked at each other for a moment, and crossing the road they knocked at our door, and my wife commanded the servant to answer the appeal. "Pray," said one of them, to the girl as she opened the door, "Does the Signor di Almerini Althenstein live here?" I was not apprehensive of the girl's reply. She did not know that di

Althenstein was my name, and accordingly answered in the negative, and he left the house apparently ill-satisfied with the result of his inquiries. I now began to consider of the propriety of changing my present abode. This was slightly opposed by my wife, who did not appear to entertain the same dread of her father's discovery of our residence that I did. I had not informed her of the circumstances which had transpired respecting his intentions towards me, which I had gathered from a variety of persons who had heard him utter his sentiments respecting our elopement, now we were no longer in his power. These I had not disclosed to her, but without doing so, I repeated my intentions of removing in so pe-

remptory and decisive a tone, that she no longer opposed my resolution of doing so. I accordingly engaged a house still more retired than the one we had quitted, and having taken possession of it, considered myself as once more safe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOON after this removal I obtained a situation of a friend, of secrecy and profit, who, knowing the circumstances under which I laboured, had exerted himself with success in procuring it for me. The ten years which I passed in this house were the most tranquil and happy of my life. I still recollect them with a sigh, as they afford a contrast to those which have succeeded. During this period, however, I had the felicity of several additions to my fa-

mily. A most unexpected interruption of my happiness, however, was preparing for me. It was the festival of St. Mark, and I had taken the whole of my family out upon the Rialto, to view the busy scene which presented itself to the eye on every side. Evening had begun to cast her sable mantle over the whole surface of the surrounding country, and we were about to return, when a party of Bacchanalians, who had just landed from a gondola, surrounded us, and in language which bespoke them of the lowest order, swore they would accompany us home. To this I was very loth to assent, but as keeping them in play I thought would be the safest method I could pursue, I determined on humouring them till I

could slip from their unwelcome company. Taking our younger children in our arms, and desiring the servant to walk before us with the others, I moved on with my little troop, and had just reached a wide street within a short distance of my house, when I saw one of the masks draw from beneath his dress a short poniard, and apparently drawing himself as near to me as he possibly could, without exciting observation by a too great eagerness. I was upon my guard, and turning round, I approached him, apparently without any idea of his intention. This somewhat deranged the plan he was pursuing. I now gave the child I was carrying to my wife. I fell behind, and seizing the dagger which I wore be-

neath my coat, I left the party to ascertain if their object was myself. I soon found out that their aim was directed towards me, for the whole party, except two, who continued following my wife, turned, and staggered after me. I had reason, as I proceeded, to think that their inebriation was affected, and this idea alarmed me more than the appearance of the dagger. I turned another street, and again in a direction in which I supposed I should meet my wife, as the proceedings of those who continued following her, might perhaps not meet my ideas. I knew the street so well, that in two minutes I had her again in view. I now quickened my pace, and was soon by her side. "This babe shall be mine,"

cried one of the robbers as I approached behind, seizing it as he spoke, " or this dagger yours ; your dastardly protector, as he will perhaps call himself, has left you to our care, we must therefore ease you of some part of your burden," seizing the child with one arm, he held the dagger to her bosom with the other. I drew my trusty steel from my bosom, and plunged it to his heart, and he fell upon the ground. " Take him," cried a voice which I immediately recollected to be that of the old Count, the father of my wife. " Oh! my father!" screamed my Victoria, throwing herself at his feet. " Off," cried he, and he spurned her from him ; " seize this wretch, he has added murder to ingratitude, we

will rid the earth of a villain who has disgraced humanity in every action of his infamous life."

Half a dozen of his myrmidons approached, to execute the orders of their tyrant.—"Fly!" I exclaimed to my wife, "lest a father die his hands in the blood of his children.—"Akmeriene!" exclaimed she, and sunk in my arms. What words can paint the distress which I, at that wretched moment felt: I eagerly looked round to seek for pity.—Perhaps, thought I, I may find it even on the faces of our murderers. I even thought the stones should weep. I might as soon have expected to have seen tears flow from the flinty hearts of the pebbles, as from the eyes of the miscreants by whom I was surrounded.

The father of my wife was the first to attempt to seize me. "Wretch!" said he, "are you not content with destroying my peace of mind—are you not content with planting poison in the bosom which fostered you, but you must add murder to ingratitude; the laws of Venice shall condemn you to a punishment which shall satiate even me." I staggered; my wife sunk upon the pavement, and a grin of contempt and malice came across the features of my persecutors. I reeled towards the wall, and recovering the strength which had almost deserted me, I placed myself against it, and presenting my dagger, I dared them to attack me. The old Count burst into an hysterical laugh, and drew his sword. I could not prevail up-

on myself to annihilate one, who, though he was the author of all my misery, was, at the same time, author of all the happiness which I had ever experienced, though I had him at that moment completely in my power; I struck him, therefore to the ground with the arm which was disengaged, and again placed myself in a position of defence.—“ Revenge the death of Almagro!” said he, as he lay across the body of his fallen myrmidon, “ by taking his assassin alive.” They prepared to do as he desired them, and rushing towards me on all sides, I received many wounds, though all so slight, that I scarcely felt them; they had, however, accomplished their purpose: I defended myself for a considerable time, and had lain two at

my feet, when, faint with loss of blood, I dropped on the ground by the side of my wife, and all sensation forsook me. I was, however, soon restored to animation by the rough usage of the robbers (for they were all robbers and assassins in the pay of the Count), who, I found, on returning to my senses, were leading me by the arms. I struggled to free myself; it was, however, a useless effort.—“Wretches!” said I—“where is my wife?”—“Safe;” returned the Count, who stood by, viewing, apparently, with great self-complacency, the scene before him, “safe,” repeated he—“safe from the snares of a murderer and a seducer.”—“Restore her to me,” returned I, “and I will die to glut your vengeance with the blood

which shall flow from the veins of your child." "Were you not the property of your country, I would revenge my own wrongs in your heart's blood ; but I shall see it flow, drop by drop, till the last lingering struggle which you make extinguishes my rage."

Valerio shuddered at the words of the narrator—" Could such a man, indeed, exist ?" demanded he. " He does exist ! he even now engages the first officers of the state, though blackened with crimes that demand lingering tortures upon his head ; he is, indeed, a villain—one, who, if justice were greater than power, would expiate his life upon the scaffold, though that life were an hundredfold." " Proceed with your narration," said Valerio—

“ The ends of public justice demand, that such a wretch should not exist!— Though he has power, Venice has laws.”—“ Venice has laws,—” returned Althenstein,” but he has the execution of them. I need say no more.”—“ Enough!” replied Valerio, “ I comprehend you—proceed.” A gag was now placed in my mouth.—“ We must secure your silence,” said he, as he gave orders for its being placed there.—“ I have secured the future obedience of one whom you call your wife. How far she shall bear from me by force, she has done it from me by choice.” “ He now motioned for our following him. This we did immediately. I became passive, and they led me after the father of my wife, bound as a criminal

going to execution, for protecting his daughter."—"Heavens!" thought I, as I proceeded—"What a perversion is here of the first principles of humanity. I had, however, very little time for reflection; the insulting sarcasms of the mob were heaped upon me as I passed through the streets which led to the state prison of the republic. I was reported by the assessors as a dangerous rebel, and that I had murdered one of the citizens, who was attempting to secure me. I, however, bore these aggravated injuries with stoical indifference; it was not then in my nature to endure—but adamant will wear, and it is equally my nature to sink under misfortunes. The repeated trials of my fortitude which I have since had

to sustain, have worn down the barriers of my philosophical indifference, and I have sunk under the repeated attacks of misfortune. I, at length, arrived, accompanied by my barbarous escort, at the gates of the principal prison in the republic, and which was used only for the confinement of those unfortunates who had had the misfortune to fall under the displeasure of the powerful; that is to say—were accused of treason: there we at length arrived.—“ We have,” said the Count to the gaoler, who opened the gates of the building, which led into the outer court, “ a traitor, who has long infected the minds of the people, with words, the import of which threatens destruction

to the state ; I command you to secure him in the lowest of your dungeons. Let him have the fare of the common wretches who starve within your walls.” The person addressed shook a bunch of keys which hung at his girdle, and there immediately appeared a band of wretches almost as villainous as their leader. “Seize him !” cried he to them the moment they appeared, “ and let us secure him—follow me !” He recollect ed, however, that I was not sufficiently secured ; and he accordingly ordered me to be blindfolded. He was immediately obeyed, and I, gagged as before, and now blindfolded, was dragged to the dungeon appropriate exclusively to traitors. I was secured by means of a large iron ring and bolt, to the

wall. I was left to my meditations—wretched companions, indeed; but such as I was obliged to endure. Now, thought I, I am arrived surely at the very achme of my misfortunes. The hate of the Count might be satiated by the thought of the pangs which I now endure. My Victoria! where, now, art thou?—Where are now my children? How dost thou feel the loss of a father, torn from thee by the ruthless arm of power?—Shall the wretched and the poor ever be the prey of the great—and shall the balance of justice be ever influenced by the short-lived wealth, pomp, and splendour of a title, bestowed by chance on one who has not even deserved the name of man. But the humbled criminal, bound in

the cold recesses of subterranean confinement, has less to fear than such authority. "Give!" I exclaimed frantically—"the torture—the rack—even double the misery I endure, and I would not change a heart, torn with accumulating sorrow, for one so racked by remorse, and haunted by the pangs of an accusing imagination. My children! let me see thee again—let me see thy tender bosoms clotted with thy blood, and scarred by the daggers of assassins—let me see thee annihilated before me, and I will bless the alternative, though a sad one, which has perverted the chance of thy longer existance, becoming a curse to the unfortunate—a burden to thyself—mayest thou, my children, ever feel the pangs of vicissi-

tude, rather than the powers of persecution."

I now began to feel exhausted by the mental and corporeal exertion which I had undergone; I threw myself on the straw which was placed within the reach of my chair, and almost sank into a state of insensibility. I recollect nothing which passed for several hours after my first entering the dungeon. When, however, I recovered in some measure the use of my recollection, I discovered a gaoler of most ferocious aspect standing over me, sprinkling water on my face, which I found had been the means by which I was restored to animation. I raised my languid eyes towards him with a look of entreaty which he understood. The

frown which followed my silent appeal to his feelings, rendered his dark visage more terrible. I raised my hand towards the door, and left the dungeon, locking the door as usually after him, and I heard the heavy bolts pass into their sockets as sounds from a bell tolling the knell of a dying wretch. I found, however, by the light of a lamp which he left on his departure, that he had brought my day's miserable allowance. For sunk, a real prisoner, I had no appetite, and I again stretched myself on my straw."

CHAPTER XIX.

I PASSED three years in this miserable confinement, without an incident to mark the gloomy monastery of the long and dreary interval; I was regularly supplied with the scanty portion which was allowed for my support, though, in fact, it was scarcely sufficient for the purpose, and the gaoler as regularly retired in sullen silence. I made several attempts to engage an ear for a moment. His fidelity to the instruction which he had received, would not allow him to

return me more than a monosyllable, and I at length abandoned the attempt, and during the last two years of my confinement, I never uttered a word, even to the only person whom I saw during the period. An incident arrived at the expiration of three years, however, which altered my apparent fate, and restored me once more to society and to my family. I had passed a long and weary day of the happiness which had been torn from me, when suddenly, I heard the bolts of my dungeon drawn back, and my gaoler entered. I was surprised at this, it being at an unusual hour.—“ You will prepare yourself for—” “ Death ! ” interrupted I—“ willingly shall I do so.” “ Not quite so bad as that, yet,” replied he, sarcasti-

cally, "but the period, perhaps, is not far distant."

"Oh Heavens! hasten it then!" replied I, and I threw myself on the straw which I before told you lay in the dungeon. "Prepare!" continued he, "for your trial.—At midnight you will be confronted with your accusers." He laughed aloud, and left me. I was invulnerable to brutality, and the scoffs of this wretch I did not feel. I was only alive to the idea that my sufferings would soon be at an end. How anxiously did I expect the moment. "In three hours," thought I, "I shall be with my persecutors." I slowly counted the minutes o'er, till at length the clock, which was in the court, had

struck the hour of twelve, and my gaoler appeared. "Follow me," said he. I feebly rose from my miserable bed to obey him. We left the dungeon, and passing through several caverns and passages, we arrived at length in a large hall, where were assembled a large body of Venetian nobility, at least such I supposed them to be. Previously, however, to my being conducted to my place, I was taken to a small chamber, and a long robe thrown over me, which completely concealed my whole figure, and a large cowl placed over my head, and enveloped my face. I was then conducted to the place appointed for the criminals, and the gaoler whispered me to remove my covering at my peril. I was deter-

mined, however, should occasion offer, not to regard his suggestion, and, I therefore, seated myself as desired, perfectly indifferent as to the event. The charges exhibited against me, were read; in them I was accused of treason and murder. The Count di——— was the Prosecutor, in the name of the State. To all these proceedings, and the questions put to me, I was perfectly indifferent. Three hours had already been occupied in the consideration of the punishment due to my crimes, at length the Count was called upon to depose as to his individual knowledge of the affair. He rose from his place.—“Justice to myself,” said he bowing, “and to the general welfare of the republic, has induced me

to bring before the tribunal of my brother Senators, a wretch, whose least crime stamps him a villain indeed. 'Tis yet in the memory of some of you, that his father experienced the lenity of the State, and though attainted for crimes of a nature less black than his son, remorse brought him to that grave from which the mercy of this meeting spared him. Here, before you, stand the son of that mistaken man, covered with crimes. In your bosoms, mercy, though at all times predominant, must acknowledge that her aids are in vain. To spare a wretch, whose ingratitude and treachery, first sought to rob Venice of its rights, and afterwards murdered those who sought to withdraw him from himself, and from the

commission of additional crimes. I have already proved him a traitor. I will now prove him a murderer.—I opposed his arm when he first struck the unfortunate man; I fell with the weight of the blow, and his second thrust was more successful. His victim fell to rise no more."

A burst of indignation fell from the whole assembly—"wretch!" was echoed from every part of the Court. "Well," continued the Count, as soon as the murmur had subsided, "may your bosoms feel enraged at the bare mention of such atrocities,—the culprit, who stands before you, is that abandoned murderer!—Let the many witnesses of the deed be examined before him—strike him dumb with terror

and remorse. He will see that even misery itself, could not suggest anything in palliation of such crimes." "Let the criminal be taken back to his dungeon," exclaimed the Doge, who was seated on his throne of state, "we will consider this affair at our leisure." My persecutor cast a look of sarcastic triumph at me, as the gaoler led me from the court, and I was again conducted to my dungeon, and left to my soul's harrowing reflections. I promised myself little from the justice of the court I had just quitted. I might have appealed to the stones, and have obtained equal redress. I now found myself completely in the power of my most implacable enemy, "It was," I reflected,

" of little importance, whether I died on the scaffold, or in my dungeon, I was convinced that the period of one or the other was not far distant: my weak and emaciated state, spoke loudly my approaching end. I was either way certain of my fate, and I summoned my utmost fortitude to meet with composure, at least, a doom that appeared inevitable. " But my children !" sighed I—" and you, my Victoria, shall I never again behold you?—never! never! again hold the dear pledges of our love to my heart! I shall here lay down an existence which I would only wish to preserve for your sakes." I had, however, scarcely finished this apostrophe, when the door of my prison was again opened,

and a stranger appeared so completely muffled up, that I could not discern a feature of his face. "Follow me," he said, the moment he entered the dungeon. With all the alacrity I was capable of I prepared to obey. We proceeded through a long passage, opposite the one I first entered, and by which I had been conducted to the Hall of miscalled justice. Through this we proceeded, till arriving at the termination, we descended a few steps. The exertion of stepping down there, however, was too great, and I leant against the wall for support. "Your weakness," said my guide, (the moment he perceived the situation in which I was placed,) "may be the ruin of us; I pray you, conquer, if

possible, this debility, or we may both be involved in one fate—take my arm." I did as he desired me, and we again proceeded. A door, to the right of the place on which we were standing, appeared, and my kind conductor applying a key to it, it yielded to his efforts. We descended, and again proceeded along an extended cavern of amazing size. My friend, having first secured the door by which we entered. The chill air, which I now began to inhale, told me we were near an entrance. This idea, added to the exhilarating influence of the fresh breeze, enabled me to proceed with redoubled alacrity. My guide perceived the effect which these circumstances had on my spirits. "We are," said he,

“near an outlet. You will soon be restored to the arms of the family from which you have been so long and so cruelly separated.” “Shall I,” I exclaimed in a rapture of surprise and delight, “be again restored to them? shall I again press my Victoria to my bosom, who has been the willing, and the unwilling cause of all my happiness and all my misery.

“Restrain your transports,” said he, “we are not safe, even now I hear a脚步声.” I held my breath and listened—the appalling sounds struck my ear. “Is it you Roberto,” said a voice familiar to my recollection. My companion replied in the affirmative.—“Who accompanies you,” again demanded the first speaker. “All is

well," returned my guide. After a short pause the intruder turned and took the lead, bidding us follow close behind him. This we did, and we soon came to an angle in the wall, which led down a narrow flight of steps. Up these the wind rushed in gusts of such force as almost to impede our further progress. "Conceal the glare of your lamp," said the man who had joined us, "the light will betray us to the sentinel above. The battlements of the tower on which he is stationed, commands a view of this spot." I was alarmed at this intelligence. "We may, perhaps," I whispered to myself, "even now be discovered, and all my fond hopes crushed within the short hour that raised them." We reached

the landing-place at the foot of the stairs, and I heard the water rushing at my feet. I still, however, had my apprehensions as to the intentions of my apparent friends. "If," thought I, "treachery is their object, I may bid adieu to a world in which I have found nothing but misery, without the least satisfaction. But," whispered the fond flatterer—Hope, "why should they be disguised, if treachery is their object, why should it be concealed from the world. I am already condemned. Public execution would rid the world of me, with as much facility as a concealed and private one, the event of either will be the greatest happiness I can attain." These arguments within myself, served but to raise my confu-

dence in my apparently friendly deliverers. "Where can Pietro be with the boat?" whispered my first friend. "I directed him," replied the other, "to draw the vessel some distance from hence, lest its appearance at this spot should excite suspicion." "Right," returned Roberto, "but, hark, I hear the slow movements of his oars, he is stealing along the surface of the water, close under the wall." "I hear him," replied his companion. "Retire into the recess, and shew him your lamp for a moment. The night is so dark he will not be able to distinguish the place." The other did as desired, and the boat slowly approached the fissures which the glare of the lamp had enabled him to descry. We stepped

into it in silence, and I left the outlet which had conducted me once more to liberty. In about a quarter of an hour we were rowed ashore, and I was handed from the vessel by the person who had joined my mysterious guide and myself in the passage of the prison. As soon as we were safe ashore, he embraced me with apparent transport. "In the name of heaven," I exclaimed, "who are you?" "Your friend, though once your enemy," returned he, in a voice which I now recognised to be that of my persecutor's son and my brother. I started and broke from him with sentiments of the most contending nature, joy and mistrust agitated me. I had always known him for one in whom the just might

place a confidence, but I had likewise found in him one who was open to the machinations of the designing and the malevolent. I now doubted whether he was my most sincere friend or my most inveterate enemy. "Tancred," I exclaimed, "forgive me if I do not participate in the pleasure which you probably experience in this meeting. You were among those who three years since attempted my death, tell me are you now the means of my restoration to life?" "To doubt is to insult me," he returned, "my actions must plead for themselves. Your wife waits for you in the most anxious expectation; did I not know that I deserved your mistrust, I would now punish your suspicions with a tenfold

vengeance.—But my revenge shall be to make reparation." I grasped his hand, but I could not speak. "Hasten," he continued, "let me introduce you to your poor Victoria. We passed through several streets in silence. At length I exclaimed, somewhat recovering my scattered ideas, "Tancred, is your sister—is my Victoria in perfect health?" "She is," returned he, "but—but not quite free from the anxiety which is inseparable from such an occasion. But you will be enabled to convince yourself, hasten with me. You are surrounded by your friends, and will soon be by your family." We at length arrived at the house in which I had three years before left all the ties which nature held dear in my bosom.

“Stay three moments,” cried Tancred, “my appearance will not alarm your wife, yours may. Sudden joy may be more fatal than the years of sorrow, which she has experienced.” I could not but acknowledge the justness of this observation, and he left me and rushed up stairs. How anxiously was I occupied during this interval, in imagining to myself the pleasure, the transport, which a few short moments would afford me. At length he re-appeared.

“Your wife,” said he, “would have followed me to you, but my persuasions prevented her. Follow me, however, and you shall again be happy.” I ascended the stairs, and opening the door, I was clasped to the bosom of

my wife. We were each of us speechless. I led her, however, to a chair, and having seated her in one, I threw myself in another, and sat gazing on her countenance, vainly endeavouring to express the feelings of rapture and delight which gave an animation to my every gesture and action. Surprise and joy for a moment got the better of gratitude, but when somewhat recovered, I turned to the author of my unexpected happiness, and with tears from a far different source than those I had lately shed, expressed how much I felt myself indebted to him. " You may suppose I was not sufficiently collected to inquire the reason of my strange emancipation. The succeeding day, however, disclosed the whole. Tan-

cred, from the first moment, as he supposed, of my elopement, had sworn an enmity against me, which time had tended to strengthen rather than diminish. To the representations of those of my friends, who interfered, he was completely deaf. To his father, when talking of revenge, he gave his whole attention, and was finally so wrought by the purpose of the vindictive old man, that he considered any means of punishing me as a virtuous effort to revenge the disgrace which the honour of his house had suffered from the machinations of a villain. He assisted in suggesting the plan which had procured my first confinement among the banditti. From these it was intended I should never escape. Providence, how-

ever, had interposed. Circumstances had rendered the confinement of Victoria, for a short period, necessary. She had by accident, as I before related, contrived to effect our joint deliverance.

This, when the old Count discovered it, nearly drove him to distraction. That the very means he had taken to separate us, should be the means of assisting our union, was more than his proud spirit could bear. What he before wanted in determined persecution, he now amply made up in the most settled malice. My brother was not wanting in wishes for an ample revenge. He was, in disguise, one of the party who attacked my family in the streets on the memorable night

in which I was conducted to prison. He was, however, one of those who followed my wife. The sight of his sister in distress, awakened all his tenderest emotions. While I was being conducted away by his inflexible father, he followed my unfortunate wife, and when she drew near the street, in which we lived, they pretended to leave her, but it was only a feint. Tancred held her in view till she reached the house. Casting her eyes around, she, for the first time, discovered that her pursuers had left her. Almost involuntarily turning, she retraced her steps to the place, where she had left me, and the brigands who had attacked me. On again reaching the unfortunate spot, she could not perceive any one near

who could give her the least information as to my fate. The blood of the villain I had slain, yet marked the place, and the pavement was stained with the crimson torrent which had flowed from the heart of the wretch. She turned from the sight, in dismay, and looking with an agonised glance upon the children by her side, hurried again towards home. Tancred saw the whole of this scene, and a pang shot through his heart. He desired his companion to leave him, and following his sister, he joined her at the moment she was entering the house. Her agitation prevented her recognising him. He seized her hand, which she withdrew with a look of horror. He now threw off his disguise. "Vic-

toria," said he, "the unhappy Tancred solicits your forgiveness." As he pronounced these words, he threw his mask from his face, and his cloak from his shoulders, and dropped on his knees before my astonished wife. "My brother!" exclaimed she, casting a look of rage and pity at the object before her, "can the murderer of my husband claim forgiveness from me!" She turned from him, and taking her children with her, rushed to the apartment we were used to occupy. Her brother did not attempt to introduce himself again that evening, but the succeeding day brought him into her presence. His efforts, however, to reinstate himself in the good opinion, of Victoria, were completely unsuc-

cessful, and he retired, a prey to the most acute remorse for the part he had acted towards an only sister, and he could not help acknowledging that her conduct towards him was just. "I have," said he, "robbed her of a husband whom she adored,—and her children of a father whom they idolized. I cannot, therefore, expect she would bestow forgiveness on an object so repugnant to her feelings." On his return home, he endeavoured, in vain, to prevail on his father to liberate me. The effect which this request had, on the inflexible old man, was productive of the most unpleasant consequences to the less vindictive Tancred. "What!" exclaimed the old Count, "are you likewise about to enrol yourself

'among those whose conduct has been the bane of my declining years? are you likewise become the abettor of your sister's disgrace?' Tancred, warm as he had been in the cause of honour, as he then termed it, was now equally warm in the cause of humanity.

"What!" said he—"can you, born in power and greatness, stoop to see a near branch of your house depend for subsistence on the charity of strangers? Can the Count de ——— see his nearest connexions pine in misery, and not afford them a scanty pittance from the overflowings of his wealth. His child—once his favoured child—stung by poverty and hunger, look on the offspring of Victoria, and bid her from

your doors, with her famished children in her arms!—Father!—I say, relent! I—” “ Hold!” cried the Count, perhaps stung at the picture which his son described to him;—“ You have changed your tone, I think: where, now, is the honour which you yesterday boasted of? “ I have exchanged it,” replied he with quickness, and a look that almost pierced the heart of the person he was addressing,—“ for humanity.” “ Then, take your acquisition, and bestow on your wretched brother-in-law. He will, before my revenge is complete, need it all! Go, yourself, and share the exile of your sister. I will not see you again, till you are returned to a sense of the duty you owe me, and yourself; away, I

say," seeing Tancred was about to reply, "I command a silent obedience; instantly quit me." Tancred obeyed. From that moment, till within a few days of the present period, he had not again seen his father in private. By repeated efforts, however, he had at length obtained permission to plead in extenuation of his conduct to Victoria, and they having, in some degree reconciled her to receive his visits, his liberality had supported my wife and family during the long period of my confinement. His efforts to obtain my release, however, were ineffectual. He had addressed several members of the Senate in my behalf, but in vain. They all stood in too much fear of the power of his father to

interfere effectually with the Doge, in opposition to the will of the Count. When, however, the long retarded moment for my trial came on, he had prepossessed so many of my judges in my favour, that the acrimonious accusations of the Count, were lost on the justly informed minds of his colleagues, and I was in part acquitted of the fatal charges exhibited against me. This so provoked my inveterate enemy, who had expected nothing less than an immediate order for my execution, than he determined I should not enjoy the lenity of the senate, and, taking advantage of the conditional pardon which had been awarded me,—ordered the gaoler to secure me properly, and determined I should con-

tinue in confinement till death ridded him of an object so odious to him. This resolution came to the knowledge of Tancred ; he, however, in his early youth, having accompanied his father in his official capacity to the dungeons of the condemned, had had an opportunity of observing the situation of the prisons. This opportunity, an ardent curiosity had prompted him to take advantage of, and of this knowledge he determined to avail himself, and, if possible, effect my release. As soon as he was convinced that the determination of his father was fixed, he proceeded to execute his plan ; and having bribed the sentinel who guarded the small postern door which looked into the moat, he hired a boat, and awaiting a

proper opportunity, landed his confederate at the appointed place. Tancred had had the keys of the different dungeons several times in his possession, and taking notice of the formation of that which belonged to the one in which I was confined, he had contrived to procure several which nearly resembled it. These he gave to the person he had employed in the execution of his project, and who was likewise well acquainted with the interior of the prison, charging him, at the same time, to use the utmost dispatch, as well as caution, in the execution of the scheme. He himself, took his station within the shade of the low portal, beneath which he stood, taking the precaution to dispatch the boat

from the spot, lest it should be observed, and create suspicion. The success of the scheme I have already informed you of. You may, however, suppose, I did not long enjoy the happiness of my restoration to liberty. This character, of which I have already given you an idea, precluded the possibility. As soon as my escape was known to him, he determined to discover the author of it, and if, unfortunately, the object was within the reach of his vengeance, to inflict the punishment on him, which he had thus been precluded from exercising on me. The discovery, however, afforded him no gratification. He could not, totally, discard his son. His name would, in that case, have been extinct, and the

idea of a line of ancestry like his, sinking into oblivion, was an idea he could not bear to think of. His vengeance lay, for some time, dormant. It was, however, only collecting strength to be discharged with redoubled fury in the end. About two months since, my eldest daughter, Angela, was torn from me in a cruel and mysterious manner. She had been one day dispatched a short distance by her mother; the time allotted for her absence had elapsed, and she returned not; nor from that period have we ever heard the least tidings of our lost child, though our utmost exertions have been used to discover her retreat.

Those men who attacked me in the street, I recognised for a party of the

robbers by whom I was once confined, and, but for your gallantry, I had again been a prisoner, bowing to Valerio as he concluded the sentence.

CHAPTER XX.

“ I THINK,” said Valerio, “ I can give you some idea as to the fate of your daughter.” “ What ?” exclaimed Almerini, starting from his chair, “ where ! oh where is she !—tell me is she well ?” Valerio shook his head. “ Is she alive ?” continued the impatient father. “ So much suffering innocence,” returned Valerio, “ must doubtless be well : but she is no longer an inhabitant of this world !” The agonized father sunk back in dreadful

insensibility. The utmost exertions of Valerio and Conrade, were exerted in order to restore him, but it was several minutes before they succeeded, at length he appeared in some degree composed. "Where are her remains deposited?" he enquired in a tone which seemed almost to dread an answer. "In the vaults of the Rusuline convent, at——," answered Valerio. "If you will be calm, I will recount to you the means by which I became acquainted with that in which she sought refuge from unheard of persecution." Valerio now recounted the circumstances, which had attended his visit to that convent in search of Angela, the misery which the circumstances of her supposed death, had oc-

asioned, and this subsequent visit to the tomb, having undeceived him. "The name on the tomb," continued Valerio, after he had recounted all the circumstances, "was Angela de Althenstein, and the story which you have given me of the uncertainty of her fate, induces me to suppose that the story of the unfortunate recluse, related by the nuns at the convent, has some connexion with the fate of your daughter."

"It must," exclaimed the almost frantic father, "I will immediately ascertain the fact, the knowledge even of her death is preferable to this agonizing uncertainty." Valerio attempted to restrain the impatience his information had created, but in vain; de Al-

thenstein determined immediately to discover the fate of his beloved daughter, and summoning his wife, gave the necessary directions preparatory to his departure. Valerio and his faithful servant took their leaves. "The circumstances which attend the life of the persecuted de Althenstein, have been unfortunate in the extreme," said Valerio, as they proceeded towards the hotel which they occupied in another part of the city. "How misapplied in general is that popularity which attends the steps of the public favourite. Nothing will very frequently procure him popularity, and he sometimes loses it again for absolutely nothing. To think this idol of the multitude the Count de ————— should be so very a wretch,

shews the fallacy of those opinions which are founded upon accident alone, and continued only because once received. His crimes are not seen amidst the plenitude of his power. Should he ever fall, those alone will then be discoverable. His injured son, though surrounded by his family, calling on him in vain for sustenance, will be in an enviable situation, compared to that of this inexorable father. This wretched man will then be obliged to fly for shelter to that family his crimes have ruined, for support, returned Conrade, such a circumstance would, perhaps, recall his dormant humanity. "Or," returned Valerio, "the Senate might provide a more secure assylum; time, however, can alone determine." They

continued their walk in silence, and at length arrived at the "hotel. Immediately upon entering, their host informed them that there had been a stranger in pursuit of them in their absence, who appeared particularly minute in his inquiries respecting Valerio, but who could not be prevailed on to leave his name, or an intimation of his business. He appeared satisfied, however, as to the result of his researches, and ordered the mistress of the house to inform him that he should visit him at a very early hour in the morning, as he had business of the last importance to communicate. In vain conjectures as to what might be the import of the communication which the stranger had to impart to him, he re-

tired to rest, desiring Conrade to call him the moment the stranger arrived. The succeeding day passed, and the promised visitant did not appear. Valerio lamented his absence should have deprived him of an opportunity of receiving the information which the stranger must have had to communicate. He prepared, however, for a visit to his friend de Althenstein, and was just leaving his apartment, followed by Conrade, when the principal waiter of the hotel met him, and informed him that the stranger who had inquired for him on the preceding evening awaited him below. Throwing the cloak with which he was equipping himself, from him, he followed the man down stairs, and was introduced to the

stranger, by the hostess, as the person he sought.

"Signor," said the stranger, "If I might be allowed a few moments private conversation, I might, perhaps, impart information, which would be of material service to you in prosecuting a secret, which, I have reason to suppose, is nearest to your heart:—"If," continued the stranger, in a lower tone of voice, "Angela de Montgolfi was dear to you,—grant me three moments in private. For a short time, unable to speak, Valerio seized the arm of his friendly informant, and leading him into a private room, and having secured the door, begged, in convulsive accents, he would detail all he knew. "Can

you not," said the stranger, throwing aside the cloak which enveloped him, "perceive nothing in my appearance suspicious?" Alarmed at the strange mode of introduction, which his unceremonious visitor had thus chosen to adopt, he eyed him inquisitively; and memory, at length, recalled to his recollection, that the person before him, was one of the banditti who had attacked him in the forest, as he was returning from Paris, on the first information which he received of the danger of di Montgolfi. This discovery did not tend to heighten the respect of Valerio for the character of his informer. Eager, however, to receive the information which was the object of this strange visit. He told him he

did, and bade him proceed. "The circumstances which your recognition of me recall to your mind, by no means heighten my character in your estimation. I perceive," continued the stranger, watching the features of Valerio attentively as he spoke; at the same time the varying emotions of hope—fear—and regret were visible in his own, once fine—but now disfigured countenance. Valerio observed these expressions of feature with pleasure. They convinced him of the sincerity of his communications whatever they might be. "The method which you then took of impressing yourself on my recollection, was by no means calculated to give me a favourable idea of your habits of life,—but your

business with me I am at a loss to determine." "Know then," continued the stranger, "that Angela di Montgolfi is in my power." Valerio started, and turned pale,—"go on," he faintly articulated. "I am, I believe, the only friend she has among those with whom she is, at present, compelled to associate." Valerio now grasped his hand in an agony—"add me to the number of your associates," returned Valerio, "could I but see my Angela, I could live among them though they were daemons!" "They are little better indeed," returned the stranger, "they, however, wear the shapes of men, and are called as such. Though surrounded as she is by them, she is safe from insult; let that re-

fection calm you for the present. Be it ours, however, to free her from them. Do you think you could have perseverance and courage sufficient to attempt her deliverance. If so, yield yourself to my guidance." "I will follow you," rejoined Valeria, "I will give myself to you, blindfold. Though she were surrounded by tygers, instead of men, I would rescue her, or lose an existence I cannot much longer support without her.—Instantly lead me to her." "Hold!" returned the robber, "all the valour which ever animated the heart of a mortal man would be insufficient to the purpose, without prudence. We must obtain by art what the greatest courage would not be equal to the attainment of—listen then. I have

in Venice, several partners in our trade. These preclude the possibility of my openly conducting you to the gates of our abode; but stratagem may effect our purpose. You know the spot on which we first became acquainted, meet me there at this hour, on the third night from the present time, dressed as a wandering musician. Your servant may accompany you, lest our plan should miscarry. You must be completely armed; but learn dispatch and secrecy. Even from your servant conceal your design, till the execution of it discloses it to him."

He stopped, Valerio, undetermined what to reply, paused. He feared treachery, but the hope of attaining the object of his fondest wishes, al-

most determined him, without consideration, to accept the terms proposed, but self-preservation, whispered doubt. Love, however, was predominant. "To hesitate for a moment," said he "is treason." Oh Angela! if thou art indeed; a sainted spirit, I shall join thee. If thou art on earth, I shall, perhaps, see thee again. I will fly to thee, though Heaven itself forbid me!" "I am well aware," replied Michielo, (for it was him who had thus sought out the residence of Valerio, in pursuance of the plan we have already mentioned,) that my project may stagger the common sons of prudence; but one, who is under the influence of a passion, such as the Signora Angela, appears capable of

inspiring, cannot surely hesitate in embracing a scheme, which offers the prospects of deliverance to so much virtue and beauty." "I am resolved," replied Valerio, "inform me, immediately of the spot on which we are to meet." "I have, already," replied he, "mentioned the place."—"The circumstance which impressed it on my recollection is yet fresh in my mind, and I should think your memory would be equally alive to it. The spot on which we fought, we shall meet again." "We will," said Valerio, "but tell me how came you by a knowledge of my existence?" Yourself had nearly precluded the possibility for ever." "I confess," replied he, "I was then thy enemy; but the eyes of thy An-

gela, have made me thy firmest friend."

"Valerio eyed him scrutinously. He thought he discovered an anxious perturbation in his countenance, which he regarded as an indication of his sincerity. "Enough," said he, "but how come you to suppose that I had escaped the murderous swords of yourself and your companions?" "When," returned he, "I left the retreat of my comrades, and myself, it was, indeed, with little hope of finding you alive.—I did not even inform our lovely prisoner of my intention to discover, as I then thought the effort would be a fruitless one. But she is aware of my ultimate intentions in her favour, though not of my preparatory steps.

But time wears, and my absence may excite suspicions which will not altogether add to my credit with my comrades. I am bound to them at present, though time may cut asunder the ties which unite us. Farewell ! remember three nights from hence we meet again; conceal what has passed, from every ear, and what will come must be from every eye." "Agreed," returned Valerio, "I will be on the spot by the time. You will know me by the breathing of the lute which I shall carry with me. Farewell ! remember on you depends the fate of all, adieu !" The stranger prepared to depart, muffling his cloak around him, and drawing his hat over his face, he left the room, accompanied by Valerio, who

saw him leave the house, not, however, without a doubt as to the sincerity of the schemes which he had planned. He returned to his chamber, and summoning Conrade, he informed him of his intention of departing for the forest early on the ensuing morning, at the same time he directed him to procure the necessary disguises for their equipment.

“Has the stranger influenced this determination?” required Conrade, as Valerio concluded his determinations: “Are we to turn minstrels, to please the whim of this obliging friend of ours? You shall charm the woods at midnight with your lute, and I sing to the storm the heroic deeds of some of your ancestors; but I shall make less impression

on the winds with my words, than they did on the shields of their adversaries with their swords, or they would have made a sorry appearance in the battle."

"Let your jokes be better timed in future;" returned Valerio—"I do not feel inclined to be merry at this moment." "I am never inclined to be merry," replied Conrade, turning from his master, when you are not so. I have already suffered with you, and would have laughed you out of a project which appears to me both dangerous and absurd. If, however, you are determined to go, I shall accompany you, though you should lead to certain death." "Of that," returned Valerio, I am already convinced, or should not have proposed my present scheme to

you." "I," returned Conrade, "like yourself, have notices by which I am connected to the world." "We may, perhaps," interrupted Valerio, "discover some. The chance is at least worth the risk. We have nothing in the world to regret; we may, perhaps, discover one who will attach us to it."

"If," returned Conrade, "we may place any reliance on the word of an assassin, we might; but can the word of a wretch be taken, who has once, for hire, as I am convinced the mercenary wretch must have been hired, attempted the life of us both. If, however, you do not hold your life too dear, to place it on such a chance, I have no occasion to be so tenacious of mine."

Valerio pressed the hand of his faith-

ful attendant—" Oh, Conrade!" said he, " nothing but the hope which I entertain of again beholding my Angela, could induce me to risk the life of one who is so attached to me! To say that I would rather you should stay, and pass the remainder of your days in peace, far from the source of all your care and inquietude, would be an insult on your fidelity. I am, however, determined. The unquestionable proofs which I received of the sincerity of this bandit, have been sufficient to enforce my assent to his proposition."—

" Then, returned Conrade, " that is likewise sufficient to determine me."—

" You," returned Valerio, " must provide the necessary instruments. My lute, you will take care, I shall have

the same on which I have so often played in the company of my adored Angela; you must likewise have two dresses in readiness, those which are usually worn by itinerant musicians, I must have: I shall likewise have my eyes concealed, in order to render the deception the more perfect." "It is necessary," said Conrade, "we should be precise in the proper disposition of our last dress; I am persuaded this disguise will be our last." "Probably," returned Valerio, "it will. If we should be betrayed, this disguise will end us; if we should succeed, we shall have no further use for a disguise—in either case it will be our last." "If," returned Conrade, "I could persuade myself that you were safe, I should be

satisfied. For myself I care not ; but to think that you should expose a life to the machinations of your enemy, which is so valuable to your friends, makes me—almost, I say, makes me weep." "The tears of pity and commiseration," returned Valerio, "do not disgrace the cheek of the veteran.—The tears of anxious fidelity look well on thine, Conrade, but they are in vain."

With resolution apparently fixed, he rose from his seat ; and Conrade, seeing, all his efforts to dissuade him ineffectual, desisted ; and Valerio retired to his chamber.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALMOST ere the sun had tinged the summits of the eastern hill with his saffron beams, Valerio had left his couch. Comrade, fatigued with the exertions of the overnight's preparations, had not yet risen. Valerio, anxious for his attendance, and yet loth to disturb a slumber in his servant, which he could not enjoy himself, sat gazing from the window of his apartment, till the sun, having collected his full force, darted its rays into the chamber below, which was the one in which

Conrade slept, and awakened him.—Upon discovering the lateness of the hour, he hastily equipped himself in his new attire, and ascending the room in which Valerio had reposed, inquired if his master still persevered in his determination?

“I do,” replied Valerio, “so let us instantly away.”—Conrade left the room, and in half an hour (so expeditious was he in his preparatory movements) they were upon the road. They agreed, however, only in part, to assume their disguise, till they arrived at the forest.—“Do you think,” said Valerio, “we can again find the cottage of those hospitable people, to whom we are indebted for our existence?” “If we can find the spot,” returned Con-

rade, "on which we were attacked, I think I can trace the road which leads to the cottage." "Then we must endeavour to find out the place," returned Valerio, "for there I propose passing the intervening time between the entrance into the forest, and the moment which the Bandit mentioned of our meeting the troop. I have, however, broken his charge concerning secrecy, as he desired me not to inform even you of my intention." "Twas well of him," returned Conrade, "to say that. He might doubt the acquiescence of any other than a youth, bewildered by love, and liable to be led into the heat of danger by youthful confidence." "Drop, I pray you," returned Valerio, "the expression of a

doubt, I do not like to hear you dwell upon. Let us to the consummation either of our hopes or our fears."

They spurred their horses forward, and, at length, reached the town in which they had previously agreed they would pass the night. This they left again early on the ensuing morning, and proceeded on their journey, Conrade, at every hour, expressing the fears which his imagination presented to him, as the result of their ill-advised expedition. The close of this day brought them near the skirts of the forest, and on reaching the inn, at which they intended to pass the night, they alighted, and Valerio desired they might be shewn to the chambers which were allotted them, and likewise desired that they might be

awakened at sun-rise. The host promised obedience, and they retired. As desired, they were roused from their slumbers by the time the sun had topped the high summits of the adjacent mountains. Conrade immediately repaired to the chamber of his master.—“We must now, Conrade,” said Vale-
rio to his servant, as the latter entered, “equip ourselves for our excursion. We shall visit the cottage of our friend in the disguise which we shall assume, and there remain till the close of the day; and when our project is ripe for execu-
tion, we will take our stand near the spot which the robber mentioned as the place of our meeting. There we must wait till the approach of the troop gives us the signal of alarm.”

They then threw over each other the cloaks which had been provided, and Conrade having patched up the face of Valerio, fixed a bandage across his eyes as though to conceal their deficiency. They each took a long pilgrims staff, and sallied from the inn, leaving the horses which brought them thither behind, as a pledge for the expence of their entertainment.

The morning was not far advanced when they issued forth, without being observed by any of the inhabitants of the house, and reached the skirts of the forest almost without meeting any one, except indeed here and there the rustic inhabitant of some neighbouring hovel, whose brow, unclouded by disquietude, afforded a striking contrast

to the disguised and wretched sons of opulence, whom he passed in his way to a neighbouring field, which it was his occupation to cultivate. It was not without a reflection on the difference of the feeling, which existed in the bosom of those he met, to those ideas which agitated his own, that Valerio saw them pass—"Congratulate yourselves," repeated Valerio, mentally, "oh! ye children of nature, or the distance which has been placed between you and ambition. The wide share which separates you from the ennobled and the great is the bar which providence has placed between you and quietude. I would willingly exchange my titled misery for your entailed joys, entailed by the galling chalice of envy,

or the whisperings of poignant regret. Here the feuds of families, and the intrigues of the aged, and the disappointed, do not intervene to dash the cup of happiness from the lips that had but just began to taste the sweets."

Valerio was so absorbed in the reflections which at that moment occupied him, that the lapse of time was forgotten, till Conrade, rousing him from his stupor, pointed out to his view the spot on which they had formerly met with the disagreeable encounter. Valerio immediately recognised it. "Let us now endeavour," said he "since we have discovered it, to find the abode of our friends, the shepherds; we will rest in their cottage till the coming on of night." "And then we'll tempt

our fate," said Conrade, " but why are you so unusually sad—we must not both despair, or what will become of our enterprise." " I know not," replied Valerio, " but I think your suggestions have affected me, I wish you had not expressed them." " And I on the contrary," replied Conrade, " feel my confidence heightened the nearer the project approaches completion." " Then our courage has not left us both," replied his master, " I will bear up against my desponding ideas, so hasten night, and spread thy curtain round, though that should conceal us for ever," " Have better hopes," returned Conrade, " some twenty years ago I felt as you do, and was disap-

pointed too; but I did not despair! I have even now some hopes of again meeting my Margaretta, even this expedition may lead to it, for to the robbers I attribute her sudden disappearance."

"Let us drop the recollection of those times," said Valerio, "I then had a father, these villains have been the bane of my family for half a century, they accelerated the death of my parent, and they alone will record mine." "Let us," said Conrade, "visit our friend the cottager, I am almost weary with this long forest task of ours, so let us go." They now left the place, and taking the road which, from recollection, they conjectured, led to the farmer's abode, they pursued.

its devious track. They soon discovered that they were right. "See," said Conrade, "we are in the track, yon house is the one in which we once found ourselves, though insensible how we came there. I believe, however, we owed the magical delusion to our worthy friends the robbers." Valerio attempted to smile, but the effort was too feeble to succeed, and he again sunk into the winding maze of thought. They arrived, at length, at the small wicket which weakly defended the approach to the humble mansion of the lone inhabitants of the forest. They passed through it, and approached the door. Conrade gave a loud tap on it with the end of his staff. The daughter of the farmer appeared, whom Va-

lerio immediately recognized for the same girl, towards the promotion of whose happiness he had so materially contributed, on his former involuntary visit. "Can you," said Conrade, "give us the shelter of a few hours in your cot. My unfortunate companion is so weary with the length of his journey, that I am apprehensive he will not be able to reach the end of it. I do not indeed think his strength sufficient to support him to the extremity of the forest." "I pray you walk in," returned the charitable girl, "and rest yourselves; how unfortunate that my husband is from home: I can, however, make you welcome till his return, which I expect every minute." "Thank you," returned Conrade, and taking

the arm of Valerio, he led him to a chair in the outer room, describing its situation to him as he directed him to seat himself. His pretended blindness Valerio now felt rather irksome, but he thought it most prudent to continue the deception, as a discovery might involve them in some disagreeable explanations, and these he considered it most prudent to avoid. "Pray," said Valerio, affecting not to be acquainted with their situation, "have we passed that part of the forest in coming hither which our friendly director described to us as having often been the scene of the banditti's outrages?" "Yes," returned Conrade, "'twas by that circumstance I knew we were near the hospitable cottage which he described to

us." "Pray how long have you been blind, unfortunate young man?" said the cottager, in the plaintive accents of commiseration. "Misfortune," returned Conrade, "has fallen heavy on us. He has been blind almost from his birth. I have been a servant in the family from whom my young companion is descended, almost from my youngest days. Death deprived him of his natural protectors, and the rapacious law of his support; under pretence of a disaffection in his father towards the government, their agents seized the vast property to which his son was heir, and confiscated it to their use. Abandoned by the world he has no friend but myself, and while I breathe he will always find me by his

side." Valerio smiled at the ready invention of his faithful attendant.— " 'Tis fortunate he has one near him so attached to him," returned the girl. " I thought gratitude, not having been able to obtain a place in the world, had retired altogether from it; but she has one votary still left in you." " I hope," returned Valerio, " I am not insensible to its dictates.

" We have now," rejoined Conrade, " travelled together nearly two years, depending for subsistence on the bounty of those who may happen to be pleased with our efforts." " I hope you will feel yourselves, at least in our cottage," returned the girl, " my husband will return, I expect, almost immediately, and he will give

you as hearty a welcome as myself, and here he is."—and she ran to the door to admit the welcome guest. Valerio, from beneath the bandage which concealed his eyes, recognised the youth whom he had before seen, and whose union with the daughter of the inhabitants of the cottage he had so materially contributed to promote. "Who have you got here, Giraldine?" exclaimed he the moment he entered the room, "in the name of patience what pilgrims could have been travelling this road, and how could they possibly discover our abode?" "We have taken the liberty of intruding on your hospitality," said Comrade, rising as he spoke, "for rest and shelter from the noon day sun. My blind

fellow traveller, here," pointing to Valerio, "was so weary with the exertions of this morning, that he was unable to proceed any further, and I led him, rather in hopes, at least of finding a resting place, till our strength should enable us to proceed on our journey." "You are welcome," returned the hospitable cottager, "to the fare which my hovel affords. I am indebted to the benevolence of a stranger, for my present happiness, and I cannot but extend that assistance, to others, which I have met with myself." "We do not find," replied Valerio, "in the world that recollection of benevolence, which you appear to possess. Here the immediate effects

of the action over the remembrance, is passed, and the giver might as well apply to a stranger for assistance should he need it, as to the object of his former benevolence. The weight of the obligation is felt no longer than the situation of the obliger continues respectable." "Whether from looks or from nature," returned the cottager, "I know not, but I trust from one or the other, I have drawn better ideas. But you must stand in need of refreshment,—Geraldine, spread the table with sufficient to gratify the appetites of our guests; they must feel the calls of hunger more than myself, and the air has had an effect upon my stomach, I think, for I feel rather impatient for my dinner." His wife, who appeared

eager almost to anticipate his every wish, quickly obeyed, and the humble board was soon spread with every thing which the field and the dairy could supply. "Now, satisfy yourselves, I beg," said the peasant, "I shall set you an example, you," addressing Conrade, "know the method of supplying your companion." The hearty welcome which the cottager gave them, affected Valerio deeply. The unaffected Philanthropy of his heart, he contrasted with the cold repulsive ceremony with which he had been accustomed to be received by the sons of opulence and refinement, and the latter suffered severely in his estimation by the comparison. He endeavoured to do honour to the meal, but his efforts were ineffectual. His

bosom was too much affected with the idea of the object which had brought him hither, to attend much to the gratifying his hunger, and a little served to deaden the keen edge of appetite. Conrade, however, was not so busy internally, he therefore exerted himself with considerable effect; not, as he afterwards told Valerio, that his appetite was particularly keen, but that the internal absence of his comrade should not be so particularly noticed. "Your companion," said the cottager to Conrade, on the refusal of Valerio to take any more, "methinks is unwell; the little he has eat is not calculated to sustain a man who is in the habit of travelling ten leagues a day." Valerio began to feel his disguise irk-

some, but the suspicion which an avowal of it would create, might be dangerous; he was therefore obliged to preserve the appearance which he had assumed. "I do not feel very well," said he, "our fatiguing walk this morning has rather deprived me of an appetite, than encreased it; but I hope my fellow traveller is endeavouring to make my deficiencies the less apparent." "I am exerting myself, to that effect, master, I assure you." almost emptying, as he spoke, a jug of wine, of considerable magnitude, which stood near him. "Well done," said the cottager, "I am not apprehensive for you, at least. I plainly perceive you possess both ability and inclination to honour any tables at

which fortune may place you.—Here, Giraldine, fill the jug again—let him repeat his dose, he must then take a bed as well as a dinner with us. A loud laugh from Conrade and his kind hostess, and a half smile from Valerio, proclaimed their satisfaction. The meal, however, being concluded. Cosmo rose to depart again for the field, and, taking leave of his guests, first giving them an invitation to stay during the coming night, he left the house. Both Valerio and Conrade now began to think the moments long which interverred between the present time and that which was appointed for the meeting. “ Pray,” said Valerio to his hostess, “ are yourself and husband the only inhabitants of this sequestered

retreat?" "We are, for the present," returned she, "but my father and mother generally live here with us, they were the possessors of this farm once, but they left it in our favour, and now alternately reside with us and a brother of mine, who lives at —— ; they are with them at present, but the season approaches, at which time they usually visit us, and we expect them here almost daily." Valerio was glad to hear of the welfare of his old friends ; and, after congratulating her on the happiness which she appeared to possess, he pressed on her acceptance a ring, which he sometimes wore on his finger, and which he now happened to have about him, on her acceptance—"Tis," said he, "the

last memorial which I possess of a grandeur which has been my bane; take it, I say: it can never be applied better, than in rewarding liberality and benevolence, perhaps, in happier times, we may meet again, then I will claim it, for, perhaps, I may then be in a situation to replace it with one more costly. I will take no refusal; till then keep it for my sake." After manifesting considerable reluctance, she yielded to the solicitations of both, for Conrade joined his earnest entreaty with those of his master; and putting it on her finger, declared she would preserve it in remembrance of her unfortunate guest. "If ever," said she, "the persecutions of your enemies should leave you without an asylum

or shelter, make our lowly cot your home. They cannot reach you beneath a roof so humble." "If I had been born beneath such a one," returned Valerio, "I might not now have been indebted to the humble for that meal, and that shelter, which affluence should have bestowed. A father might still have protected me,— and a mother still watched over me with maternal tenderness; but a more brilliant, and less happy lot awaited my birth, and I now feel the want of even commiseration for my misfortunes."

"I think," said Conrade, interrupting them, "it is necessary we should depart, or we shall scarcely reach the skirts of the forest by midnight. Va-

lerio agreed to the proposition—"we shall not indeed," said he rising; "I feel, however, so refreshed that I have little doubt of being able to walk, even farther than we have to go were it necessary." "I am rejoiced to hear it," returned Conrade, "we shall be the better able to bear our spirits up against the apprehension of the robbers, who I am informed are sometimes met with in the forest." "Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Geraldine, "if you should meet them." "Our poverty will be our best security against any attack from them, I think," said Valerio, smiling, and taking the arm of Conrade they walked towards the door of the cottage. "I pray you," said Geraldine, "beware. 'Tis now the rob-

bers are about, and if you should meet them, you are undone." "Do not be alarmed, my kind friend," said Valerio, "they will not find us worth the trouble of assaulting. Adieu," cried he, as they passed through the wicket.— "Adieu! may you ever feel the happiness which awaits, by the decree of Heaven, the benevolent and estimable,"

CHAPTER XXII.

“ ‘Tis now,” said Valerio, “ the hour approaches for determining me one of the happiest or one of the most persecuted of beings. If I should be the victim of treachery, I have no one to whom I can attribute my misfortune, my own credulity I have alone to blame.” “ We shall see who is in the wrong,” returned Conrade. “ The curtain of nature, however, begins to drop around us, and we shall soon be inclosed in darkness. We must endea-

vour to discover some shelter from the night dews, or that may, perhaps, injure you in your present weak state."

"Thanks for your kind attention, good Conrade," returned Valerio, "but I will not suffer consideration to deter me from any thing. I will instantly take my station on the spot appointed, and await the coming of these Marauders."

"Let us hasten to it," continued he, after a pause, "or the darkness may prevent our choice of the proper place." They immediately quickened their pace, and in a few minutes were on the spot. "Let us," said Conrade, "take our places beneath yon hillock, we can issue forth the moment the noise of horses' feet announces the

approach of the troop." Valerio agreed to the proposition,—and making a passage through the underwood with their hands, they soon reached the place, and discovered that the furze and small trees concealed the entrance to a cavern, apparently of some extent; the difficulty which they found in entering it, however, plainly evinced that it had not recently been inhabited, and they gathered courage from the idea. "We shall not begin danger of a surprise here," said Conrade, "this must have been the abode of Adam, I think, as, since his time it do'nt appear to have been made use of." Valerio smiled. "And we," continued Conrade, "will follow his example, we will make the abode

of our general ancestor our refuge, at least for a few hours."

Valerio and his faithful servant now proceeded to the examination of the interior of the fabric. They could not, however, discover any thing which would enable them to ascertain the purpose to which it might have formerly been applied; after having carefully examined every part of it, they took their stations at its entrance, and anxiously awaited the minute which would end their anxious suspense. "If," said Conrade, at length breaking the silence which had continued uninterrupted almost for three hours, "we should be unsuccessful,—even if this bandit is not sincere, and our present project should fail, and we should sur-

vive the extinction of our hopes, we may, at least discover a clue by which we may be enabled to trace the present mysteries to their source. The lady Angela, most probably is still in existence—on that point, the information, however we may take it, has satisfied us. Let us not then despair. At all events the worst that can befall us, is preferable to a longer continuance in the uncertainty under which we at present exist. I am now, anxious, only for the moment which will disclose to us the certainty. "Good," returned Valerio, who had listened only to the conclusion of his speech. "Good," replied Conrade, "that is not quite so certain, every thing that one may utter, is not good." "I beg your

pardon," cried Valerio, rousing himself from a reverie which had occupied incessantly, from his first entrance into the tavern, "I was not aware exactly of what you said." "So it appears," returned Conrade, "I am aware of the reflexions which at present occupy your mind, and I had endeavoured to rouse you from them. I have succeeded, though not quite in the way I intended." "You always succeed," returned his master, "but the hour must be late." Conrade replied in the affirmative. Valerio drew out his watch, and placing it to his ear, he caused it to strike. "It is past eleven," said he, "the moment approaches." "Let us leave this place," said Con-

rade, " and hasten into the road." Valerio assented to this proposition, and they re-traced their steps through the furze and underwood towards the road. They soon reached it, and they placed themselves beneath a large oak which shadowed its side. Conrade placed his ear near the ground, and anxiously listened if he could distinguish the sound of horses feet. " All is, as yet silent," said he, rising, " if they are on the road at all they are not within a mile of us. " It is not exactly this moment appointed," returned Valerio, " it must want some time of it." Conrade did not reply. He almost held his breath that no sound might escape him. " Hark ! " he at length exclaimed, " what sound is

that," "tis 'the hollowing of the wind in our late abode," returned Valerio. "It is so, I believe," returned Conrade, "now again all is quiet." In anxious suspense the weary moments elapsed. The silence was only now and then interrupted by the almost involuntary exclamations of Conrade and his master, as the wind agitating the thick foliage of the forest, created a momentary alarm. "The period must surely have elapsed," said Valerio, as he again drew his watch from his pocket, and applying it to his ear, he continued, "Tis past midnight,—we may expect them every moment, would that they would end our suspense. Conrade again applied his ear to the earth. "I think I hear the clattering of hoofs

along the road," said he, at length, after a pause, "I hear the reverberation of their feet. They approach," he continued, rising from the ground, "let us dispose ourselves, so as to avoid, if possible, the supposition that our meeting was premeditated." "True," said Valerio, adjusting the bandage over his eyes, "lend me your arm, and we will move forward some paces, and return to meet them, by that time they will have reached this spot." They proceeded a few steps, and Valerio having given Conrade the proper method of address, they returned. The moon which had been obscured during the whole evening by passing clouds, now burst forth and disclosed a view of the road a considerable way before

them, and the idea which Conrade had formed of their distance, proved just; the whole troop were within sight. Valerio drew forth his instrument, and forcibly struck the strings. "Who have we here?" exclaimed the foremost of the troop, halting the moment he reached the two musicians. "Signors, you have chosen an odd time, indeed, for the exercise of your profession." "Hasten forward," cried another, who had by this time arrived, "these unfortunate devils will not suit our purpose." "Why so much haste?" returned the first, "our time is now completely our own." Valerio and Conrade were now nearly surrounded by the whole band. One, however, who appeared to be the

chief, pressed forward and eagerly enquired the cause of the delay. In the voice of the questioner Valerio recognised that of the bandit, whose mysterious visit was the cause of the present rencontre. By a pre-concerted signal, Valerio gave Conrade to understand, that the person who addressed them was their friend:

“ Signor,” said Conrade, “ we are but travelling musicians, whose unfortunate destiny have led us to this forest in which we have already passed several hours in a vain endeavour to discover an outlet. If you will be kind enough to put us in the road, you will be performing an act acceptable to our Holy Saint. We were beguiling the tedious way with our own music, when

we had the good fortune to meet you."

"A meeting with us is not considered as a piece of good fortune by every traveller who passes this road," replied the person whom Conrade had so pitifully addressed. "I do not, however, think, you will have any cause to repent it." So saying, he, desiring some of his attendants to do the same, first seized Conrade, and binding up his eyes, he desired him to mount the horse of one of his followers, at the same time assisting him to do so. "This gentleman," said he, next taking Valerio's arm in his iron grasp, "does not appear as though he stood much in need of a bandage. Nature appears to have saved us the trouble of binding up his eyes; but he seems particularly in-

need of a guide. I shall take that office on myself," he continued, leading Valerio to the side of his own horse, and almost lifting him upon it, he proceeded to mount himself behind. Commanding his followers to follow his example, the whole troop, in a minute, were again horsed, and on the road.

"We will provide some entertainment for our friends at the castle," said the one behind whom Valerio was mounted. "We had better have left such musicians as we have got," returned the man who had Conrade with him on his horse, "where we found them, I think, or we may, perhaps, through your love of music, unpleasantly dance to a less melodious instrument." "Away with your fears," re-

turned Michielo. " If your heels were of as little use to you, on the appearance of danger, as your head, I would give but little for your longer existance." " But my courage is equal to—" interrupted the robber. " Silence," again cried Michielo, in a voice that echoed through the forest. The whole was presently hushed, and they proceeded almost in silence through the various windings of the wood, till they reached the temporary abode of the Banditti, which was situated in one of its most intricate recesses. For several moments the first salutation on the only outlet which the pile appeared to have, remained unreturned; at length a hollow voice within demanded the word.—" Death!" return-

ed Michielo. The door was immediately opened, and the whole troop, dismounting, entered. Michielo and one of the robbers led Valerio between them into the pile, and two others, following the example set them, took Conrade under their protection. Upon the bandage being removed, Conrade found himself and master in a large room, and Michielo only in the apartment with them. "Thus far," said the latter to them, in a low voice—"we have been successful. Silence, or we are undone. You are at present safe. Continue in your present habit for a few hours; for late as it now is, we shall set off again before sun-rise—I must away, or my absence may create suspicion. Be prepared; you will

be on the road again in less than three hours." He now retired, carefully locking the door of their chamber after him. "Thus far we have been successful," said Valerio, as he left the apartment; how far we may yet be so, remains to be determined." "In three hours we again set forward," replied Conrade, not noticing the doubts which his master's speech seemed to express; "we may hold ourselves in readiness for a visit I suppose, as they do not intend we should exist long without food. I imagine they are aware of that," he continued, "for I hear the footsteps of some one this way." The door was presently opened, and a robber appeared, with a salver covered with viands of various descriptions. "Here," said he in a

rough voice, depositing them as he spoke on an old table, which decorated one side of the apartment; "there is something to renovate your exhausted strength; you must be quiet, however, for we leave this place again in a short time" "Comrade," said Conrade to Valerio, taking his arm, "let me lead you this way. I should think hunger, like instinct, should draw you towards it."— The robber left the room, carefully, however, securing the door after him. "As yet, all goes well," said Conrade to Valerio, when the man had retired. "I begin to have hopes that our suspense is nearly at an end." "There is no doubt of that;" returned Valerio—"in either case, suspense must be nearly at an end." "True;" returned Con-

rade, " We need only pray for a speedy conclusion to our next journey—that will determine every thing." Comrade now became so busily employed, that he could no longer spare time to give utterance to the ideas to which circumstances gave rise. Valerio, who scarcely felt any inclination even to taste the eatables before him, notwithstanding his long fast in the forest, had full time for reflection. As yet, however, he could not determine in his mind the consequence of his present proceedings, or to what incidents this movement of his friend, the robber, would give rise. He was deeply involved in this maze of conjecture, when the robber who attendeded on them with their repast, again entered, to inform them that the

time of their departure was arrived. He was soon followed by two or three more, who proceeded once more to replace the bandage over the eyes of Conrade, who submitted very patiently to the operation.

Valerio and his faithful attendant was again led from the room, and being conducted to a vehicle, was desired to ascend it. They willingly obeyed, rejoiced that so easy a method of conveyance was afforded them. Two of the robbers followed them into the carriage, and the remainder, mounting their horses, ranged themselves behind. Michielo, who was one of those who were within the carriage, gave directions for them to move forward, which they soon did, at a very rapid rate. They travel-

led in this manner several hours, only stopping a short time to take necessary refreshments. At length they reached the shore, when Valerio and Conrade were again desired to alight, and being placed between two of the Banditti, they were led along the narrow sandy strand ; and, having reached the spot where they were to embark, they were assisted into a boat, and were speedily on board a vessel which lay at some distance from the shore. The bandage, however, was still continued round the eyes of Conrade, who in vain prayed to be released from it.—“ We shall soon be in security,” replied one of the robbers, to the entreaties of Conrade to that effect, “ and then you shall be at perfect liberty.” After a few hours?

sail, the anchors were again dropped, and Valerio and Conrade were informed, that they had arrived at the place which was to be their abode, at least for some time. They were taken ashore, still blindfolded, and after being conducted through a variety of windings, which the unfortunate musicians concluded to be the passages beneath the castle, they were led up a flight of stone-stairs, and, tracing a long gallery, they were at length announced to be in the apartment destined for their reception. The bandage was now removed from the eyes of Conrade.—“Here,” said one of the robbers, “you will find the conveniences which will be necessary for you. Michielo has the direction of these things, and he has ordered

that you should be placed here!" "We are very well satisfied," returned Valerio, "but would not the Signors choose that we should amuse them in return for their hospitality?" "That, likewise, is under the direction of our second Captain, Michiolo. He brought you here, and he now has you at his disposal."

Valerio had now gained all the information he wanted, and the bandit who conducted them to their chamber retired, first taking the precaution, apparently observed on every occasion, of securing the door after them. The reflections which the peculiarity of their situations excited in the minds of the wanderers, was soon interrupted by the entrance of Michiolo, who, with

apparent satisfaction on his brow, demanded the hand of Valerio. The young Count extended it towards him. " You shall soon be free again," said Michielo. " To-night, perhaps; listen to my instructions; this night we have a banquet prepared for us. On the summons of the Captain you must attend, to increase the pleasures of the entertainment; then you will behold your Angela. Your emotions, however, must not betray you, or we are undone; restrain yourself at least a few hours, as the least indications of alarm may be our ruin. The Signora Angela is not aware of your disguise. When you are again conducted to your apartment, prepare yourself for immediate flight. Ere, however, that event takes place

you will see me again—beware!” He retired, leaving Valerio and Conrade almost lost in amazement. “To what will this lead?” said Valerio, the moment Michielo had retired. “To liberty and happiness, I hope,” replied Conrade. “I begin to like this robber; a long association with crime does not appear to have its usual effect on his mind, a bursting spark of humanity is discernable even beneath an exterior so rugged and unseemly.” “I am now,” returned Valerio, “only anxious for the moment which shall confirm or demolish my rising prospects. Hasten, oh, time! and disclose the hidden secrets of thy womb. I hate thy lagging dullness.” “It is little use exerting your lungs in expec-

tation of moving that inflexible old reaper," returned Conrade. "He will not mend his pace for beating." "It must be a serious subject indeed," returned Valerio, "that would induce you to divest your face of its grin, or your tongue of its nonsense." "But for my tongue and my nonsense," returned Conrade, "we had not been taken up by these honest gentlemen on suspicion of being musicians. A man ought to speak well of the bridge that carries him safe over—so my Margaret used to say." "If Margaret was here," returned Valerio, "you would be less fond of mimicking her; her tongue would have more weight than mine has, I believe." "She always precluded the necessity of a reply," re-

turned Conrade, " for when once she began to speak, she generally continued till she went to sleep, and then a reply would have had little effect." " Hush," replied Valerio, " I hear some one in the gallery. They have passed our chamber, though I believe," he continued, after listening a moment, " silence however will be our best plan, lest our conversation should become too free, and attract the attention of our host, guilt is suspicious." " True," answered Conrade. They both now took a station at a window which overlooked the adjacent country; twilight was beginning to descend around, and the dusky hues of evening precluded a protracted view of the surrounding landscape. Night, at length, threw a

complete veil over the whole extent of the castle; and three of the succeeding weary hours were passed by the wanderers in silence; Michielo himself, at length, announced that their attendance was required in the great hall. "Beware," he again repeated, as they proceeded along the gallery, "the least emotions on your part will ruin us." Valerio promised acquiescence. On being led, however, to the table, the sight of Angela seated beside the Captain, nearly made him lose all recollection of the charge given him by Michielo, he would have caught her to his bosom, but the frown upon the brow of the robber, deterred him; and his wonted resolution returned. The business of the evening was concluded,

and Valerio and Conrade were reconducted to their apartment, whither they were soon followed by Michielo.—

“Now,” said the latter, “follow me.”

The pretended musicians immediately obeyed. He opened a door which was on the farther side of the room, but which had not been perceived by either of its inmates, and they ascended a flight of stairs, apparently winding. They found a turret, till a small door at the top obstructed their farther progress. Michielo applied a key to its enormous lock, and it slowly grated on its rusty hinges, and the keen wind rushed through the unclosed portal.

“We are now,” said Michielo, “on the top of the castle. Our descent to the plain below lies on the other

side. I will point out the road by which you must reach it, and leave you." He took them to a small door which led from the battlements to the dungeons of this abode of villainy, and bidding them descend, he presented to Valerio, from whose eyes the bandage had now been removed, a key and a concealed lanthorn. "Take these," said he, "you will meet with no interruption in your way, or any place you can mistake for an outlet; descend till you reach a small shutter in the wall, this you will find immovable till you touch a spring which lies beneath it, to this there is a small ring attached, pull that towards you; and the shutter will sink into the wall; the door which it conceals is then the only bar between

you and liberty, that key is your passport through it. When you are without the wall, take the only beaten track which presents itself, and proceed till you reach the cliffs to which that track will lead you; you will there find moored a small boat, take your places in it, and await my coming." So saying, he shut the turret door, and left Valerio and Conrade to pursue the directions he had given them. These they implicitly did, and soon once more found themselves at liberty, still following the instructions they had received, they took the path he had pointed out to them, and after an hours walk, found themselves on the cliffs, beneath which the sea rolled in hoarse and dismal

murmurs. Near them they discovered a cavern of amazing extent. "Let us enter this place," said Valerio, "it may serve us for shelter an hour hence, perhaps, if we should need it." "We will," said Conrade, "what have we here?" he continued—"armour, I will be Sir Knight in a short time." Valerio laughed, as Conrade began to equip himself. "I am now," said Conrade, "a match for them, devils or mortals." His impatience, however, would not allow him to completely encase himself, and half-armed they once more prepared to sally forth. They continued their rout along the cliffs till, at length, they discovered a cleft in the rock, which on pursuing, they found led to a sandy shore, be-

neath the over-hanging summits of the surrounding mountains, and having reached the waters'-edge, found the boat which Michielo had spoken of, harboured beneath a jutting point of rock. At this moment, as though inauspicious to their errand, the sky became suddenly overclouded, and pealing thunder rolled above them in heart-appalling echoes. "Oh, Angela!" exclaimed Valerio, as each rushing blast upheaved the angry deep, "how persecuted are we! Even now thou art exposed to all the horrors of these convulsions of nature; the lightning alone disclose to thee the horrors of the scene around thee, even now the red glare points to the surrounding dangers." "Speak to the sea," said Con-

rade, dryly, "that throws a greater obstacle in our way than either thunder or light, bid that lie still, and the others would serve as for torch-light and music."

The words of Conrade had not the effect which was intended. Valerio heard not a word of the consolation they offered him. Conrade, however, whose ideas were not quite so abstracted as those of his master, fancied he heard the sound of approaching voices, mingle with the blast. The fury of the tempest had now almost spent itself, and Conrade was the more confirmed in his suspicions of their being pursued, as the sounds which he first heard did not, by any means resemble the voice of Michielo. He told his

suspicions to Valerio. "Hark!" said he, grasping the arm. of his master, "we are betrayed, let us away." Several voices were now heard, mixing with the hollow murmuring of the passing gale. "Listen," repeated Conrade, moving towards the mouth of the cavern, in which they had taken shelter, "listen, of whom do they say they are in pursuit?" "That he should turn traitor," exclaimed one of the robbers who now passed the mouth of the cavern, "not one of them, however, can escape," replied another bandit, "they cannot yet have left the island, and we are certain of finding them. They are all of them—." The rest was lost in the distance, which now intervened; and Valerio and C.

rade in vain racked their minds for a solution of these speeches. They concluded, however, that Michielo and Angelo must have left the castle, and that their flight must have been discovered. The motives which had influenced the apparently mysterious conduct of Michielo towards them-selves, they now concluded to be, at least, suspected, and the whole plot must have been, by this time discovered. They resolved, however, to sell the last hopes as dearly as possible, as they concluded death, or at least eternal imprisonment, would be the consequence of their being discovered. "Let us leave this place," said Conrade, "and take to our last resource, *the boat*, we cannot now expect to be

joined by either Michielo, or the lady Angela. If we leave the island, we may, perhaps, be enabled to rescue them." "Agreed," cried Valerio, "let us hasten to the boat. They left the cavern, and had just reached the vessel, when a glare of light suddenly darted from beneath the overhanging cliff, and disclosed to them six of the banditti, who were in search of them. "We have them," cried the foremost, "shall we secure them for ever?" "Halt," cried another, whom Valerio recognised, on his near approach, to be the Captain. Let them feel the weight of our chains before we dispatch them, or the sybil-tale of this maniac may be verified." The robbers, drawing their swords, approached the spot

where Valerio and Conrade stood. The musicians were not long in preparing to defend themselves. Valerio and Conrade placed themselves with their backs to each other, a pistol in one hand and the other armed with a sword. The ardour of the robbers abated at the sight of so much intrepidity as their destined victims seemed to display, and, apparently not aware that they were so prepared for an attack — they stopped. Their insulation seemed, however, to last but for a moment. Again advancing, they thundered a shower of blows on the uplifted swords of Valerio and his servant, who retreating as they fought, hoped to reach the boat, ere either of them received any material injury. They had

succeeded in gaining the side of the vessel, when a blow from the sword of the Captain glancing against the uplifted weapon of one of his attendants, struck Valerio sideways on the head, and, stunned by the blow, he fell to the ground. On the consternation which this accident, for a moment occasioned, Conrade took advantage, and leaping into the boat, which lay unmoored directly behind him, and sticking his oar in the ground, was instantly beyond their reach. The suddenness of this movement, seemed for a moment to suspend the very faculties of the robbers. Conrade plied his oars with all his might, and soon vanished in the dark mists which covered

the whole surface of the water. They soon, however, recovered the surprise which this incident had created, and taking the still motionless form of Valerio on their shoulders, moved once more towards their abode, now, as they conceived, robbed of all its boasted security. The disagreeable sensations which the present situation of Valerio excited, soon roused him from his stupor, which the banditti released him from it, and placing him in the midst of them, they again took the road to the castle. From the conversation which passed between the robbers, Valerio learned the stratagem which Conrade had made use of, and he could not sufficiently admire either the intrepidity or the attachment of

his attendant. The situation of **Angelà**, and the peculiar circumstances under which they met in the cavern, threw him off his guard, and he challenged the mask, whom he knew to be the wretch **Monfredino**, with his reputed villanies. The guilty soul of the persecutor shrunk within him. Recovering his resolution, however, he for a moment consulted his friend the Captain, and then directed the deserted orphans to be each conveyed to separate dungeons, on their arrival at the castle. His orders were obeyed, and they were immured, as **Valerio** was given to understand by the man who attended him, for ever.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WEEK passed in the most wretched lingering torments of suspense. The inaction of Valerio contributed, at least to close his wounds which he had received in his scuffle with the robbers in the vaulted passage. His tedious hours, however, were not, completely passed in solitude.

His reveries were interrupted several times in the course of each day, by the unfeeling intrusions of his gaoler, who never failed to remind him that he

might consider his present abode as the last he would ever inhabit. Grown callous in the school of adversity, however, this threat lost even the power of moving him. For the present he could not wish to live; and the future presented nothing animating. Even hope had left him, and he only interpreted in imagination, the moment which would rid himself of existance, and the remembrance of his misfortunes. A fortnight had nearly elapsed, when he was one night roused from his unweary slumbers by the rough voice of his gaoler, desiring him to rise. Valerio prepared to obey. His weakness, however, was so great, the effort was almost ineffectual; with the assistance; however of the bandit, he rose from

his pallet of straw, and slowly tottered after his conductor. He was led into the hall, in which he was first introduced as the musician, and was soon after followed by Angela, supported between two more of the banditti. The first object which caught his attention on his entrance, was the body of Comrade in the armour in which he had last seen him. "Alas!" thought he, "all my hopes are then annihilated. My faithful friend, thou art no more. If I should follow thee; and how soon may that be the case. Heavens expedite the moment! If I should be happy again, thy memory and thy faithfulness shall be perpetuated." "Our apprehensions are at an end," said Pietro, laughing, "he should not

have stolen our old iron, you see he could not swim with it." Valerio made no reply. "Pray," said the captain to him—"had you any other accomplices in your plan of escape, than those whom we have already discovered as having assisted you?" Valerio was silent. "Speak," said he, "or the rack shall extort it from you,—we have conquered the obstinacy of many more resolute than you appear to be." "I had none," said Valerio, "if I had, your threat would be useless." "You may perhaps tell us so," said the Captain of the banditti, "we shall not, however, now put you to the proof—bear him hence." They were about to execute this commission, when a trooper rushed into the hall breathless,

and apparently fainting, with apprehension and dread. He staggered towards one of the pillars, and seizing it, supported his tottering frame against it, unable to speak.

"What alarms the fool?" said the captain, at length tired with this dumb spectacle of horror; "speak!" "Rush to the battlements!" at length, he exclaimed—"if they are not by this time lined with troops." The whole assembly, at length, anxious to obtain a confirmation of their worst fears, from his eyes, sat immovable, fixed like statues to their seats. "Rush to the battlements," repeated the robber, or we are inevitably lost." The captain of the band immediately rose from his chair, and drawing his sword, he left the hall,

commanding his men, with a stern voice, to follow him. They instantly obeyed, leaving Valerio and Angela alone its inhabitants. "In spite of this subterfuge, it is Conrade," cried Valerio to Angela, the moment they left the hall—"we are free!" The idea gave him new strength. He seized the arm of Angela, and drawing it within his, he led her towards the door; and having quitted the hall, they began to ascend the gallery-stairs. "Let us conceal ourselves," said Angela,—"if the robbers should be worsted, they may rack their vengeance upon us, should we fall in their way." I had by this time reached the top of the staircase, and had entered the gallery which led on the apartment in which Angela had

been confined. "Let us enter this room," said she, "I can prevent their following us, by fastening it inside."—They entered, and Valerio found, attached to the door a massy iron bar, which reached completely across and lodged in a groove, made to receive it. Having properly secured the door, Angelia pointed out that which opened to the turret; Valerio, followed by Angelia, ascended the lower flight of stairs. "I hear the clashing of swords," said Valerio—"the battle is commenced, I must away." He ascended the remaining stairs, and reached the door, which led out upon the turret, and opening it slowly, attempted to discover the situation of the contending parties. The contest was maintained by

the robbers with a valour which would have graced a better cause. The superior numbers of the assailants, however, was evident from the number of the robbers who had fallen. Valerio advanced from his covert, and soon found himself on the rear of the troops which the Dey had sent. Weak, however, as he still was, from the incurred wounds and inhuman treatment he had received from the robbers, he rushed towards the thickest of the fight, when turning an angle of the battlements, he perceived Conrade in close encounter with the mysterious mask. The skill and courage of Conrade, at length laid his antagonist bleeding at his feet. This event was not unperceived by the captain of the robbers, who was at the mo-

ment animating his men to continue the contest. He approached behind him, and with one blow would have levelled him with the earth, when Valerio, interposing his sword, rendered the effort ineffectual. Conrade turned upon his cowardly assailant, whom he soon stretched lifeless at his feet. "We meet again, my dear master," cried Conrade, embracing Valerio with every demonstration of joy. He again left him, however, to follow the robbers who now began to retreat on all sides, followed by the victorious soldiers. The fugitives, after another ineffectual stand, surrendered to the mercy of their assailants. Valerio, accompanied by Conrade, again sought the chamber of Angela. Valerio caught her to his

arms. "My beloved Angela," cried he—"We are again free; the efforts of our persecutor will now be vain." Surprise and joy nearly overcame her; recovering, however, they left the room, and returning to the hall, where the robbers who had surrendered, were bound. "Order," said Valerio, "search to be made among the dead for the mask. He was obeyed, and the unfortunate delinquent was discovered amidst a heap of slain, near the spot upon which he had fought and fallen. His cold corse, however, was all that remained of him. This Conrade caused to be conveyed to the hall, "Remove the mask," said Valerio, "and confirm my horrid suspicion—Show Manfredino in his real character—a murderer!"

page." "Bear the dying man to a couch," exclaimed Almerini—"his confession may be of benefit to mankind." He was obeyed; and the wretched Petro was carried to the couch prepared for him. He began his narration in the following terms:—

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ I WILL not disgrace my parents by naming them. Suffice it that, at the age of eighteen, I found myself destitute of friends and money. It was impossible to exist long on the scanty pittance which the charity of strangers afforded me, and I had come to the resolution of ending my life and my miseries together; when, one evening, as I was returning to my miserable lodgings;

almost famished with hunger, a stranger accosted me :—

“ My lad,” said the man, tapping me on the shoulder, “ have you any inclination to improve your condition ; you apparently cannot be worse situated.” “ I would,” replied I, “ set my miserable existance on any chance, that would rid me of, or improve it— but what, pray, is the motive for the inquiry ? ” “ If you will follow me,” returned the stranger, “ you will know.” I hesitated. “ If you have any one dependent on you,” continued he, “ remain as you are ; I will not be burthened with any one who has a tie that binds him to those who prosper in the world. I sink in it. If I could find one who would risk sinking with

me—I should rejoice. Perchance, however, I may float; you, in that case, will do so with me. Determine quickly." "Proceed," replied I, "I will follow you, though your terms are not very inviting—any thing is preferable to remaining here. Lead the way."

The stranger proceeded, and we soon reached the banks of the river. He hired a gondola and directed the men to row him to a certain spot. They did so, and landed him opposite the end of a narrow street, up which, (as soon as we had landed,) we bent our steps, and arrived at a house somewhat retired from the street, and defended by a large pair of gates. My companion announced his arrival

by thundering a most violent signal on the massy knocker. A small door in one of the portals was slowly opened, and my conductor entered, bidding me follow him in, which I did, though not at that moment with much alacrity. As soon as we entered the court-yard, which was of amazing size, my guide drew a pistol from his pocket, which he gave me, desiring me to fasten it in a girdle, which he likewise drew from his pocket, and fastened round my waist as he spoke, then drawing out his dagger from beneath his cloak; he desired me to place that alongside the pistol. Thus equipped, we were both of us introduced into a room at the further end of the yard, and which appeared to me, on our en-

trance to be the residence of the infernals rather than that of Venetians. I did not, however, yet repent the agreement I had concluded. In this room were assembled three or four more, apparently unfortunates like myself. "Here," cried my conductor, "I have brought another man, who has renounced the world like yourselves. Young as he is, he has already met with enough in it, to induce him to hate it, and so little in the world, that he was starved in it." "Good," returned an old man, who was placed at the head of the table, "if every one who is disgusted with the world, had courage enough to quit it, we should be powerful enough to make war against our oppressors. I was desired to take a place at the

table, which was most plentifully covered with the most tempting viands, and appease my craving appetite.— With this request I cheerfully complied, and did ample honour to the feast before me. “ You will live well here,” cried one of the men, “ better perhaps than when surrounded by those you may have hitherto miscalled friends. We found the ties of nature, so weak, that we have since substituted those of necessity, and we have had, hitherto, no reason to be dissatisfied with the change. “ May we never have reason to be dissatisfied with it,” replied one of the men, “ I will drink to our being further united.” “ Bravo !” repeated the whole of us, myself by no means backward. My zeal

appeared to please my new companions. They shook me heartily by the hand. "You will be a valuable addition to our little republic," cried one of them, "we may add to our number, but it must be by slow and cautious means." "Just so," replied my conductor, hitherto "we must, however, begin to think about business, enough time has already been spent in congratulations. "True," replied another, "what business have we in hand." "A job," returned my conductor, "we have a visit to pay to the house of the Count di Audfrey, at midnight. Till then though, I believe we are at leisure." I, by this time understood, that the occupation of my new friends, was robbers; this discovery, though it

startled me at first, it soon felt less obnoxious to my feelings, and in the course of the evening, I participated, even with satisfaction, in the apparent enthusiasm of my companions, in the cause in which they were engaged ; and I, like them, began to regard the idea of revenge, on that world, which had treated me so cavalierly, when in it, with eagerness.

“ If,” thought I, “ the good things of this world were meant alike for all, I am justified in wresting from my fellow beings that inheritance of which they have deprived me. I am a creature equal to themselves, and till their perfidy and injustice drove me without the pale of those feeble regulations which they have denominated barriers

against each other, I was equally with themselves heir to my equal part of the general benefits. I have now enrolled myself in a republic, which, though small, is at least just to each of its members, and I shall glory in warring against those who have first driven us from their bosom and protection, and would send us to the regions below for attempting to provide for ourselves. We will not, however, attach infamy to ourselves, by tolerating such injustice, though gilded over by sophistry and delusion, and I am impatient to begin my career of dreadful retribution! The appointed hour, at length, arrived, and I followed four of my new companions from the yard. I was not

thought of sufficient importance to be informed of the object of our destination. I followed, however, in silence, till we arrived at the house of a certain nobleman, now deceased. We were all introduced into a private apartment by a secret door, and after waiting some time, our employer entered to explain the business upon which we were to be dispatched. Upon seeing a stranger, however, he eyed me suspiciously, and beckoning our leader to follow him, they left the room together, for one more private. Almost an hour elapsed ere either of them returned to us, when, our leader, whose name I found was Alberto, again appeared, and we all left the house. "The Count," said he, at length, "wishes the daughter of

the Senator Rosalvi secured for a short time, and we must execute the business to-night.” This now, did not seem to have the least effect on my companions. I was, however, rather terrified. I began to think my new business of attacking the houses of senators at midnight might end disagreeably, and I did not like the idea of being broke on the wheel, notwithstanding the stoic example which my companions set me.

—“There is, however,” thought I, “no method of retreat. I must venture the risk which I have taken upon myself. If I should be arrested in the fact, it will be but suffering a death less fraught with lingering torments than that which would have awaited me had I stayed longer among the famishing

children of beggary. We arrived at the house, which was pointed out to us, and I was deputed, by Aberto, to reconnoitre the position of it, and discover the best mode of entrance. I soon returned with the result of my investigation. I described the most probable method with so much apparent animation and plausibility, that my plan for assailing it was speedily adopted, and we all approached, determined to venture on our desperate plan immediately. The front of the pile was decorated with six columns, which were placed so near the wall of the building that we were enabled to ascend between the two, and commencing our operation at the same moment, we reached the top of the building toge-

ther. After climbing over the parapet to which this conducted us, we endeavoured to gain admittance to the interior of the house, with as little alarm as possible. Aberto, after some time spent in search, at length discovered a small trap-door, which we contrived to remove, and a flight of steps assisting our descent we reached the higher gallery in safety. So far successful, we now began to consider a plan for a further continuance of our enterprize. "According to the idea which I have received of the situation of this place," said Aberto, "this gallery must lead to stairs, which communicates with the one below; at the farther extremity of which the chamber of our prisoner is situate." Again concealing the lamp

which we carried with us, and which had been in part disclosed; in order to discover to us our situation, we ventured to continue our mighty perambulation, and cautiously descending the stairs, reached the gallery which contained the object of our nocturnal visit. Slowly traversing the spacious corridor, we all reached the door of the chamber which we had every reason to suppose was the one in which the young Signora slept. This was secured on the inside. We looked anxiously at each other. One of our men, however, was fortunately provided; and we succeeded in forcing the feeble lock which fastened it. On our entrance, the first object which presented itself was the young lady, very devoutly kneeling be-

fore a crucifix. Our company, however, was so unwelcome an interruption to her devotions, that she fainted. "Bear her hence," cried Aberto. He was immediately obeyed, and four of the ruffians, seizing the inanimate form before them, bore it from the chamber. We had just reached the upper gallery in the castle, when the sound of a number of footsteps on the stairs immediately behind us, as likewise a number of flambeaux on the ceiling, directly over our heads, shewed we were closely pursued. We rushed forward, and were ascending the stairs which led out upon the top of the house, when a sudden gust of wind blew the door down into its place, and our utmost efforts were in vain exerted to re-open

it. By this time our pursuers had begun to ascend the last flight of stairs, on the top of which we were. "Their retreat is cut off," cried one of the people, "we have them in our power." "Hold," cried Aberto, "if a man of you advance a step further this dagger shall be buried deep in the bosom of your mistress." These words contained magic. They immediately stopped. Aberto now applied the bar which had been so useful in forcing the door of the chamber, to the fallen trap-door, and after a few blows, it at length yielded to his efforts. He now desired his followers to pass him, and having deposited their lovely burden on the stairs, they ascended through the aperture. The people below, however, had no

sooner perceived that we had left the objects of their solicitude behind us, than they likewise prepared to follow us, and their leader having charged an old man, with the still inanimate form of the Signora, they rushed up the stairs after us. To return into the street, by the way we came hither, required time and care; Aberto, therefore, commanded us to prepare for resistance, striking the first man who ascended from below, at his feet. The whole of the domestics, however, were soon assembled on the broad covered roof of the Chateau, and we were in three minutes opposed to double the number. Our small number was soon overpowered, and all but myself stretched their length at the feet of their nu-

merous adversaries. I at length received a blow from a heavy bar of iron, which one of them bore in his hands, and I fell amidst the slain. The men, as I suppose, considering the business completed, retired; as on my recovery I found myself by the side of our fallen leader. By degrees I began to recollect the circumstances which had placed me in this situation. My recovery of strength enabled me to rise, and after a few moments longer consideration, I began to descend from the roof by the means which I had employed in ascending thither. My task was soon completed, and I reached the ground in safety. It was a consideration with me, whether I should return to those of my companions, whom I

had left at the place of our rendezvous, or whether I should again try my fortune in the world. I was so weary of the latter, that notwithstanding the difficulties I had already encountered, I determined for the former. I accordingly once more bent myself towards the place of their residence. I soon reached it, and was admitted by the only one who then remained in it, to him I related the particulars of our late dreadful disaster, at the same time desiring his advice as to our future conduct.—“My advice,” said he, “is useless, we have no alternative. We will, however, revenge the death of our comrades, on the family of the tyrant Senator.”

This, however, it was impossible for us to accomplish till the next even-

ing ; the intervening time we spent, closely pent up in our retired abode. The moment at length arrived, and we sallied forth. We learned that Rosalvi was to accompany his daughter to a masquerade, where they were to be met by the husband of the young Signora. Thither, at the appointed hour we followed them, and after spending some time in the gardens to which we were introduced, we discovered the trio in close conference, in a pavillion which was situate in a retired part of the garden. We carelessly passed the door of the apartment, and I caught a part of the conversation. " I have traced," said the old gentleman, " this business to the author, and though not one of the villains escaped death, I

have discovered the instigator of the vile act." "Then, be it mine to revenge it," replied the lover, "tomorrow shall give me right to protect your daughter, and I will exercise it to the destruction of this villain." He passed his arm within that of his mistress, and prepared to leave the apartment. "Let us return," said my companion, "we must attack them as they step from the pavillion." We did so, and as the unfortunate youth led his mistress from the spot, we jointly plunged our daggers in his bosom, and he fell lifeless to the ground. "You too, must be secured," cried my companion, drawing his poignard from the bosom of his victim, and plunging it, yet reeking, into the heart of the lady,

"or our errand will not be complete." She fell by the side of her murdered lover. The unfortunate old man was mute with agony.

"You must live," cried Carlos, "that you may be convinced we are revenged." Valerio and Comrade shuddered, Angela uttered a piercing shriek. "We," continued Pietro, "together left the spot, and soon quitted the gay throng, and, walking with all possible expedition, reached the outskirts of the city, and we contrived to destroy our habits, the necessity of which, till now, had not struck us."

"We must join our companions in the forest," cried Carlos to me.—Venice is no longer a place for us." Of this I was convinced, and therefore heartily con-

curred in the plan of joining the banditti, and we were soon safe again amidst the old companions of Carlos. "This has been an unfortunate expedition," cried the Captain of the band, on receiving the melancholy information of the loss of so many of his best followers, "but Carlos has done the duty which he owed the manes of his friends. Our establishment in Venice, however must, for some time at least be dropped." I was enrolled in the band from that moment; my life has been a series of crimes, equal to the one which attended my first introduction to the robbers. I have related this one as an instance of the length which we permitted ourselves in the persecution of our schemes. I begin,

however, to feel that a conclusion to all my crimes is at hand, and I must not waste the moments which are left me in the narration of things foreign to you. I shall pass over several years, and relate only those which immediately concerned my introduction at the chateau Montgolfi." "Oh ! hasten to disclose them," said Angela, "let me know the motives which induced you to betray me :" " There lies the motive," continued Pietro, pointing to the dead body of Manfredino, " but his dark spirit is for ever fled. After three years our establishment in Venice was again resumed. I was appointed leader under Michielo. The many crimes which this appointment caused me to commit, now lay heavy on my

fleeting spirit. I now see the injured bleeding ghosts of my victims haunt my pillow, and knock against my breast to keep awake its horrors. To the circumstances, however: twelve months ago, our ambitious watch discovered that it was necessary, to secure his own tranquillity, that an infant should die, and we were employed to accomplish the nefarious business. I was promised, by the vile instigator of the act, a sum if I would secure the babe, and his tranquillity, myself. I drew the infant from the breast of its mother, on which it had been sleeping, and was about to plunge my sword into its tender bosom, when it awoke and smiled at the glittering of the blade,

which at that moment played about its eyes. I could not strike it. I placed it by the side of its inanimate mother, and left the house as I had entered it, unperceived. I was deeply ruminating on the events of my past life, and my agony of mind I supposed, was apparent on my face ; the convulsive emotions of my features attracted the attention of a holy father, who was passing to his convent from a neighbouring house, whither he had been visiting an unfortunate, who was in his last moments. The placid features of the venerable father, contributed towards restoring a portion of serenity to my own. " My son ! " said the holy man, " what disturbs thee ? " " There are motives of disquiet in the

convent," returned I, " they must therefore, be supposed to abound in the world." The holy father eyed me as I repeated these words. " Will you venture to seek an asylum from them with me?" The difference between our convent and the world, may be greater than you imagine," returned he, " if you are disgusted with the world retire from it." " I have every reason," returned I, " to be disgusted with it. I will willingly fly from it,—not the smallest tie binds me here, and I am now willing to leave it." " Follow me then," returned the father. I did so; he was a brother of the convent of St. Merio. Father Anselmo introduced me to the superior. " Father Anselmo," repeated Valerio. " Father Anselmo,"

repeated the dying Pietro. I am aware of our knowledge of him. 'Twas that holy man who admitted an assassin to his friendship ; who extended the rites of hospitality to every one ; he thought all men like himself,—just—amiable—and pious, and he knew not guilt except by name. The first weeks which I spent within the holy walls, were the most tranquil which I had ever experienced ; I began to hope I was admitted a brother, before the customary period allotted was elapsed, in compliance with my earnest request. The novelty however, at length, however, wore off, and I began to feel the dull monastery of retirement. I was thus situated, when a message from the Chateau di Montgolfi arrived. The

worthy Anselmo was dead ! and I, unfortunately for you, was deputed by the Abbot to attend in the place of the deceased. I felt the importance of the charge which your deluded father placed in my care, and was determined, at least, to fulfil the sacred duty, so solemnly delegated to me. The arrival of your uncle, however, overturned all my projects. With him I was already acquainted. At his instigation I again became a robber. I conducted you to my retreat in the forest. Eternal imprisonment or death was the sentence which was passed on you by Manfredino. Once he attempted the latter, but even he, villain as I knew him to be, could not accomplish it. Your funeral, however, has been

performed with all the pomp which could be imagined, and your uncle took possession of your property. He was still, however, fearful of your escape. He attended himself to your every movement, masked and armed. His watchfulness first discovered your flight with Michielo, and likewise that of the supposed minstrels, and he was the first to rush to the battlements to repel the assailants. Retribution came. He was almost the first who fell.

CHAP. XXIV.

ALMERRINI approached to congratulate our new happy pair, upon the approaching termination to all their difficulties. The sound of his voice appeared to animate the dying robber; he cast his eyes towards the face of the persecuted man. "Am I," groaned the repentant wretch, "Am I to be driven from the earth, by the sight of my villainy! You have lost a daughter?" "You mistake yourself," returned Almerrini, "I have recovered her." "Then you must have recovered her from the dead," returned Pietro, "I saw her deposited in the tomb. Your enemy the old count di----- was the cause of your suffering so much, I was one of the assassins who bore you to prison—I was one who deprived you of your daughter. She, however, escaped

from us, and took refuge, as we afterwards discovered, in the convent of St. Ruseline. The old Count applied, himself, for her. He determined to revenge himself on you in the person of your daughter, and he visited the convent for the purpose of securing her. The old Abbess answered his application for her by leading us both, for I accompanied him, into the cemetery of the convent, and pointed out her last abode to us. The Count consoled himself with the success which his plans of vengeance on your head, had already met with, and we left the convent.—My short moments will not allow me to discover the deceit, for I can no more.” He fell backwards on the pillow, senseless; and a sigh, long and convulsive, closed his wretched existence. “ May Heaven!” cried Valerio, leaving the side of the couch, “ have more mercy on thee, than thou hadst on your fellow beings. I have no longer an enmity against thee.” Angela took the arm of Valerio, and Almerine following, they left the room, and bent their steps towards the chamber of Angela, giving

Conrade directions to secure the remaining robbers, and prepare for their departure for Venice, early the following morning: as they proposed leaving the castle as soon as the vessel, which lay moored beneath the cliffs, could be prepared for their reception. "In the ways of men," said Almerini, the moment they were seated in the room, which had so lately been the prison of Angela "there is something so near approaching the ridiculous, particularly in ambition, that we can scarcely believe they possess a reflecting faculty.— I almost begin to doubt the existance of reflection in a mind swayed by ambition."

"We can," replied Valerio, "only imagine them actuated by a motive, at least wanting reflection in the formation of it. That the deep laid plans of Manfredino should fail, strikes at once to the very root of villany, and tells us, in convincing terms, of the existance of retributive justice. We wait, however, your explanation of the wonderful incidents which appear to have befallen you since I last saw you.

Detail them?" "In the incidents which I have experienced since I last saw you," returned Almerini, "the hand of Heaven is manifest." He paused as though he experienced a difficulty in detailing circumstances, which, though pleasing were painful. With the incidents which had first led to the subsequent friendship which now existed between Valerio and his friend, Angela was already acquainted, as likewise with that part of his history which was connected with the events about to be related. To her, therefore, any relation of preceding circumstances was unnecessary, and he began his narration. "With the utmost speed which it was possible to use, I flew towards the convent, and as soon as the horses could reach it, though not so swift as my impatience would have led them, I arrived there, trembling with apprehension, and an uncertainty arising from I knew not what. I soon made my business known, and was introduced to the Abbess, of whom I enquired for my daughter. "We have already," cried the good lady, "answered so many questions

respecting this novice, I begin to be tired of replying to them; but as to the relationship which you have given yourself to her, puts us under the obligation of answering you, I must confirm the information which you have doubtless already received:—she is dead!” This formal reply was uttered with so much ill nature, that I believed her when she said the enquiry grew irksome. It, however, struck to my soul. I felt that farther questions would be useless, and I rose to take my leave. “Madam,” said I, “Had not prejudice steeled your bosom against the appeals of nature, we could have all owed nuns for the sensations which a father feels on hearing the news of the death of his child from such a source.” “I can excuse what you have just uttered,” returned she, “in consideration of your feelings. Your daughter is as dead to nature, as I am to humanity.” The door of the parlour opened, and a female entered, her tremulous footsteps, as she slowly approached me, seemed scarcely equal to the task of supporting her weak frame. As she ap-

approached, the long veil which completely covered her, reached to her feet. As she drew nearer, her agitation seemed increased, the emotion was contagious, and I likewise trembled. "My Father!" cried she at length, throwing herself into my arms. "My Daughter!" I repeated, "but what mystery is this?" "I am the cause of all the mystery which has been observed," returned my child, "my second mother," turning to the lady Abbess, whose conduct I had late been condemning, "is free from blame.—Well might she conclude me dead—dead to happiness I have been, and impious wish,—I desired to be dead to nature." I held my recovered treasure still closer to my heart, and she buried her face in my bosom. "Explain the motives of your flight my child," said the Abbess to my daughter, "my conduct must appear mysterious to your father, I can then explain my motives for the line of conduct which I have pursued. "Oh!" cried my daughter, quitting me and taking her hand, "why did I doubt you,—why did I doubt that your bene-

volence would have protected me?" "You should not have doubted, my daughter," returned the good mother, "my intention, my abilities, perhaps you might have suspected with more reason. The chances were greatly in your favour that either would be overcome; but explain my child." My daughter did so; wiping the tears from her eyes, she said—"From the manner in which I escaped from my persecutors, I could not entertain a doubt but that they must have traced my rout. I knew the influence of the Count, into whose power I found I had fallen, and I likewise knew the perseverance with which he pursued any object which he had once determined on accomplishing. I again fled with the sister of the novice Constantia. I found an asylum, and remained in it till all hopes of a farther enquiry, than that which had taken place; and I learned from Constantia that every idea of discovering the place of my retreat was laid aside. I have returned, and I again behold you my father; I found you seeking your lost daughter in the asylum,

which, in a moment of distress, hospitably received her." I now looked towards the Abbess for an explanation of her conduct, which this account had not at all tended to elucidate. She appeared to comprehend the question, which I spoke with my eyes, and she replied : "Till yesterday, I had reason to suppose my hapless Angela dead. You left the convent," continued she to my daughter, "in so, to us, unaccountable a manner, that I concluded you deranged, and caused all possible dispatch to be used in pursuing you, but in vain. Sometime after you left the convent, our gardner, old Antonio, discovered the body of a murdered female, mangled and disfigured, in the forest. He took her lifeless body in his arms, and bore her to the convent; on examining her mangled features, she bore too great a likeness to our lost Victoria, that the whole convent joined in the opinion, that some dreadful fate must have awaited you on quitting the convent, and that 'twas your corse which the old man had thus discovered. We had the remains of the unfortunate

person interred, and in reply to the enquiries which were made by the friends, as I supposed, of the deceased, I ever directed them to the stone which we caused to be placed over her." Just as the Abbess had concluded her speech, the lady Constantia, whose kindness my daughter had experienced, entered the parlour, and, throwing herself at the feet of the Abbess, entreated her pardon for the deception she had pretended; this, with the intercession of myself and daughter, was granted, and I, accompanied by my recovered treasure, left the monastery, and speedily reinstated my daughter in that home from whence she had been so cruelly torn. The abrupt entrance of Conrade, one evening, however, roused me. On his explaining the cause of his unexpected visit, however, you may conceive I was not backward in accompanying him, and with the result of the affair you are happily acquainted. Permit me to congratulate you on your prospect of approaching happiness." Valerio extended his hand towards his worthy, but persecuted friend, and re-

turned his good wishes to Almerini, on the recovery of his daughter—"but," continued Valerio, "has any alteration taken place in the disposition of the Count towards yourself and family?" "None," returned Almerini. I left the inexorable old man dead to every idea, but thereof continued revenge. He was nearly at his last gasp when Conrade applied for the troop. As I was not permitted to approach him, I did not think his situation demanded that I should remain in Venice. I therefore determined on being a party in the business." Valerio could not but regret the hatred of the dying Count towards his unfortunate son-in-law. "We should proceed to Venice immediately, and in the friendship of yourself and the young Count di —— we will find a remuneration for our past misfortunes." The party now separated for the night, after placing a sufficient guard over the robbers who were in confinement. Early the ensuing morning the party left the island, directing the officer of the troop to remain at the castle, and commence a search throughout

the building. In order that nothing might escape the vigilance of their researches. Valerio, assisted by Angela and Conrade, described to them the different passages which led to the prisons of the fortress, and likewise directed him, if possible, to discover the treasures of the robbers, who doubtless must have concealed the price of their infamy in some part of the fabric. The vessel was soon in a proper trim, and Valerio and Angela, accompanied by Almerini and Conrade, left the castle with two or three of the soldiers, who, having formerly been sailors, understood the management of the ship. A favourable wind soon brought them to the wished-for port, and they took carriages to convey them towards Venice. "We must take the forest in our way," said Angela, "a person is confined there of whom you have some knowledge," addressing Conrade, who accompanied them in the same vehicle. "Who concerns me," repeated Conrade, "pray whose fate can now possibly concern me, surrounded as I am," looking round the carriage as he spoke. "A few hours will convince you."

returned Angela, "order the postillion to hasten towards the forest." She was obeyed, and they proceeded with accelerated dispatch. The suspense of Conrade, however, was great. How he could be interested in the fate of any one confined in the forest he could not conceive. At length the postillion was, by the direction of Valerio, ordered to turn up the path which led from the main road, towards the haunt of the banditti. "Have you not yet an idea," said Angela to Conrade, "of the manner in which you are interested in this journey?" Conrade replied in the negative. The vehicle had by this time reached the small portal of the building, and the party alighted. Their application for admittance was answered by old Bernardo. The hoary villain trembled at the appearance of the armed soldiers who accompanied Valerio. They desired him to precede them into the body of the building. Valerio and Angela were anxious that not the least hint should be given Conrade of the price of happiness which was in store for him. The strange confusion of voices

which were now heard in the hall, among which was distinguished her supplicating tone of Bernardo, imploring mercy, brought Margaretta from the sitting room. Conrade was the first person who presented himself. They spoke the language of nature, but nature thus acted upon is dumb, and so was Conrade and Margaretta. After a few moments they were joined by Valerio and Angela. "Well Conrade," said the latter, "did I not tell you, you were interested in the journey?" Conrade bowed, his heart appeared too full for utterance, and he could only thank her with his eyes—It was not till they again mentioned the necessity there was for their immediate departure, that he recovered the use of his tongue—"Come along, I say," he exclaimed, putting Margaretta's arm under his, and drawing her after him towards the carriage which was waiting, "If ever I think of leaving you again, may your tongue be gifted with double volubility, and I, incapable of restraining it by the gout in both legs. Angela and Valerio smiled; the whole party, however, having

once more retaken their places, they were again on the road to Venice. The moments had passed so rapidly since the wonderful interposition which providence had made in favour of our now happy party, that, as yet the circumstances which attended their deliverance had not been enquired into. Valerio now therefore, desired Conrade to explain the circumstance of the armour being on the person of the drowned man. "When," replied Conrade, "I left you on the shore in the boat, I rowed with all possible expedition toward the opposite coast. This I was not long making. At the moment, however, of stepping from the vessel which had been of such essential service to me, I recollected that it was probable that the banditti, in revenge for my escape, would render any effort, in your favour ineffectual. I had recourse to stratagem, in order to impress them with an idea of my death.

The storm had made dreadful ravages among the small vessels with which the coast was lined, and many had fallen victims to its fury. I easily reconciled it to

myself to injure the dead in favour of the living; and accordingly taking a dead body which I found on the beach, I placed the armour, which I wore, round the corse; and having, as nearly as possible made the dead man resemble myself, I returned to the island, and deposited it near the spot from which I had taken my departure. The stratagem had the desired effect." "It is to that circumstance, I doubt not," replied Valerio, "we owe our lives." "The security into which it lulled them," replied Angela, "proved their ruin, and the words of their mad victims are verified." Valerio demanded an explanation. Angela handed the paper to which contained the words of the maniac. "They are, indeed," he replied, after having perused it.

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"Mercy on me!" exclaimed the old house-keeper at the Chateau di Montgolfi, "in the name of heaven, can the lady Angela still exist?" By the bustle, however, which succeeded her arrival, she was convinced that such was really the case. "Can

we not avert," said Angela, the moment she was again in safety in the Chateau Montgolfi, " can we not avert the disgrace which this affair will bring upon us. Is it not for ourselves that the least possible notice should be taken of the unfortunate part which my misled uncle has had in the plot to which we were so near falling victims ? Valerio, for some moments, sat meditating. " If," said he at, length, " the senate can be prevailed upon to restore to us our rights, with the interference of the executive power, the plan is practicable." In pursuance of this plan, which the delicacy of Angela had prompted her to adopt, the petition of the Count de Valerio de Valmont, and that of the heiress di Montgolfi were presented to the council. After examining minutely into the affair, the award was given in their favour, and the restoration of the property preceded but a short time the union of the lovers. The few robbers who escaped were permitted to enjoy the life they had so dearly bought, and precept and benevolence assisted in rendering them no longer the scourge of

their fellow men. The persecuted Almerini again enjoyed peace both of body and mind; the death of his father-in-law has put him in possession of those comforts, of which tyranny and persecution had hitherto robbed him.

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In contemplating the domestic happiness of his friend Almerini, now that he was free from the dread of persecution, Valerio could fully appreciate that which himself indulged. He found he was, after the lapse of a few years the father of a family, in which his whole happiness centered; and he could not but regret that infatuation, which appeared to take a few of the acquaintance which his situation obliged him to form from their homes, and the ties which should have been dear to them, to pass the sacred moments among those who had never known adversity, and who could not properly estimate prosperity. It was not in the giddy throng of dissipation he considered happiness was to be attained, it was only in the enjoyment of those

pleasures, the after-moments of which are not embittered with regret, that he expected to find content; and it was only in this even course of existance that he attempted to find it. The maddening ideas that cloud the moments which the dissolute dedicate to retirement, are so severe a draw back on the pleasures of the world, that they form an antidote to all the transports dissipation ever gave. "My friend," says Valerio, frequently to Almerina as they together cast a glance at the days which are past, "we find exemplified in our lives the truth of the observation which hold that we are capable of comprehending infinity. We have frequently together regretted, the misfortunes which we have contended with;—we did not then reflect that to those misfortunes we might owe a true sense of the happiness which we now enjoy." "True," returns Almerini, but you may carry the idea still further.—It is only in contemplating scenes like this, that the mind becomes sufficiently enlarged to entertain a due sense of the greatness of that power which rescued the world from chaos !!!

FINIS.

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